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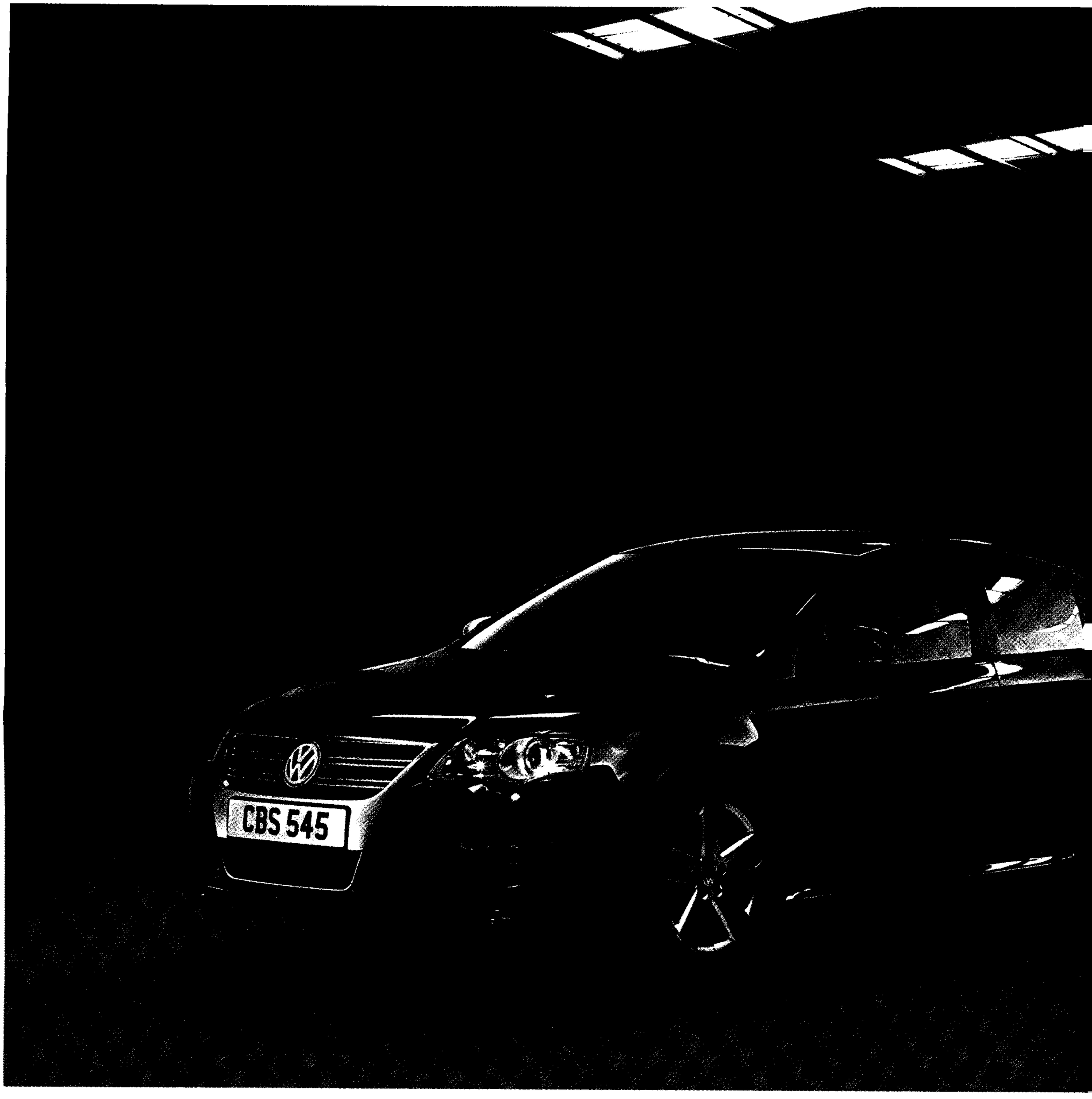

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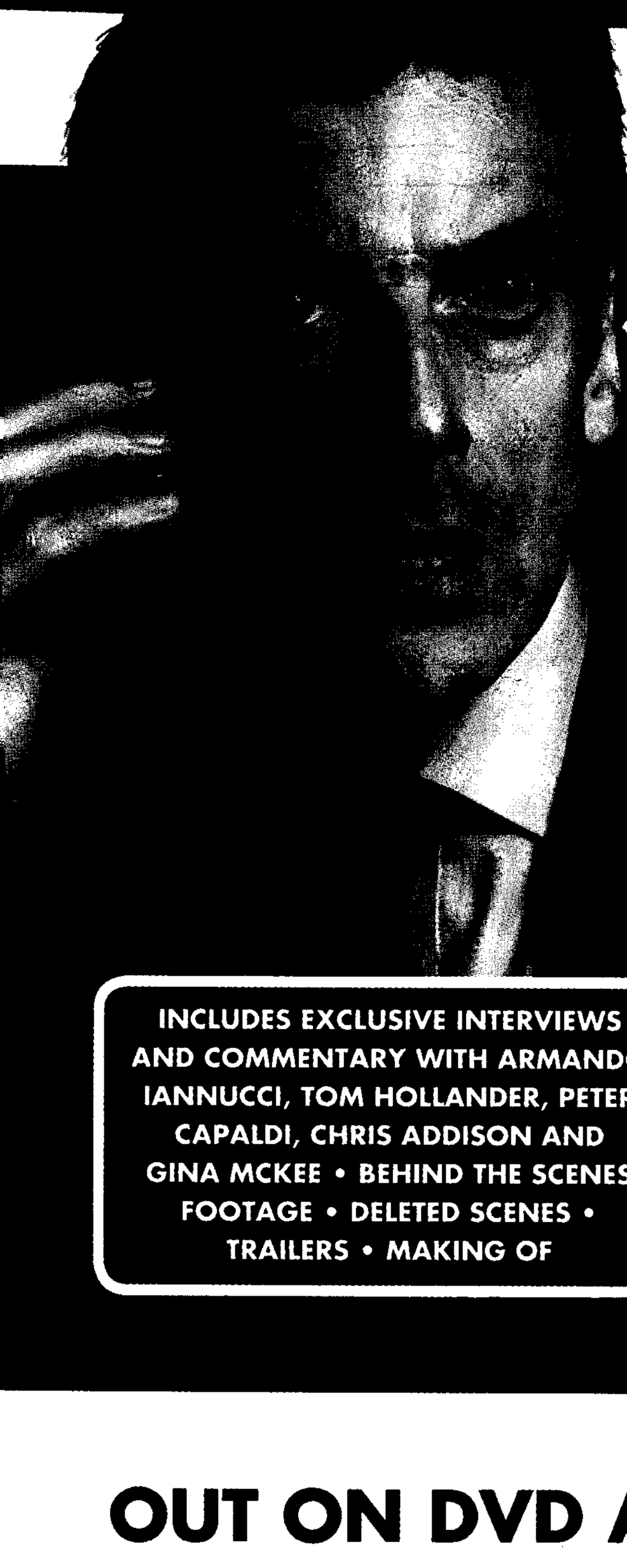

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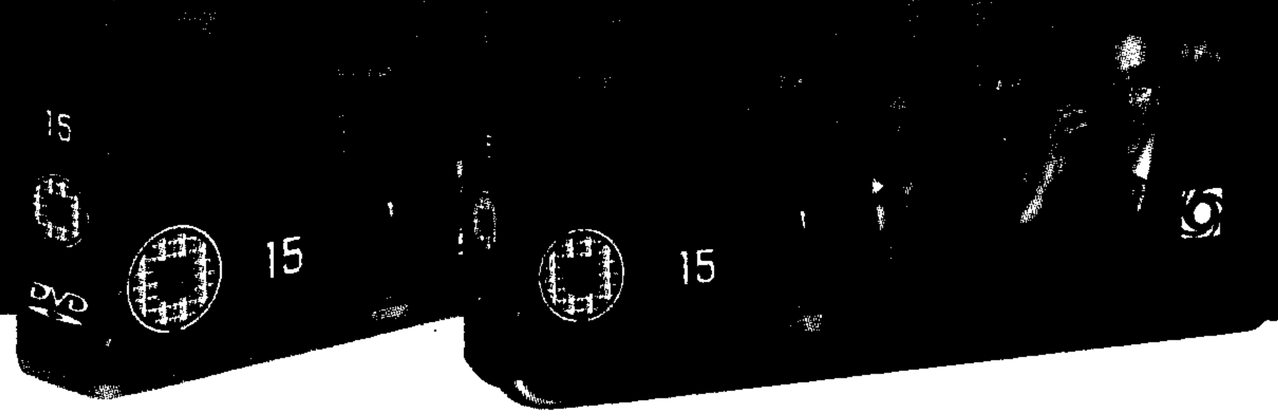

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THERE was more than a hint of jobsworthiness in the insistence by Financial Services Authority chief executive Hector Sants that limiting bankers' bonuses is not within his remit; it's a task for the government.

Hence the most insipid "guidelines" on City pay that will change hardly anything. The only penalty for the most outrageous bonus deals will be to require a bank to hold a bit more capital, which wouldn't have prevented the emergence of all the toxic products that caused the credit crunch. And even these guidelines might be withdrawn if other countries haven't clamped down by this time next year.

Sants justifies the sweetheart deal by explaining that "it isn't competitive to be out on your own". But a check of the FSA's remit unsurprisingly reveals no mention of "competitiveness" in the regulator's role, which is limited to: maintaining confidence in markets; promoting understanding of the financial system; consumer protection; and tackling financial crime. Any relaxation for the dubious argument that City whizzkids would go and work elsewhere (and that would be a bad thing) is an entirely political question for government, not the regulator. But on this point Sants *was* prepared to step outside his job specification.

Former investment banker Sants, a youthful 53, has never ruled out a return from gamekeeping to poaching. If and when he makes the move back to the City, he can thank himself for the "competitive" pay package that will doubtless welcome him.

AMONG the dodgy practices that need to be deterred is market manipulation by well "incentivised" bankers given too free a rein, such as that perpetrated by a Citigroup company, Citigroup Global Markets Ltd.

In August 2004, the firm's traders dumped £10bn-worth of government bonds on the market, causing it to collapse, then rapidly bought them back for an instant profit. For this clear abuse the company was fined a record £14m by the FSA for "failing to control its business effectively". Although traders were, in the regulator's words, "encouraged to increase profits through increased proprietary trading", ie gambling, the company "failed to take reasonable care to organise and control its affairs responsibly and effectively".

Among the company's senior directors who "failed to take reasonable care" was a certain Sir Win Bischoff, who last month was asked to help clean up banking as chair of the partly taxpayer-owned Lloyds Banking Group.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

7 Months since Gordon Brown boasted in speech on global economy that "Britain is better placed to benefit as the storm passes, as pass it will".

7 Countries which have emerged from recession ahead of Britain since then

THE 2.4m unemployed shouldn't expect too much help from a Jobcentre network whose services the government butchered not so long ago in a typical bout of boom-time wishful thinking and figure-fiddling.

Under Gordon Brown's "efficiency" programme – kicked off in 2004 to show before the last election that Labour could out-cut a Tory party that was running a "faceless bureaucrats" campaign – 16,000 Jobcentre jobs were slashed. Most cuts, hard to justify even at unemployment levels then prevailing never mind allowing for inevitable economic slumps, coincided with the merger of jobcentres and benefit offices into "Jobcentre Plus" offices (accompanied by the inevitable botched IT "upgrade").

So badly handled was the process that in 2006 parliament's work and pensions select committee described the service as "truly appalling", lamenting that "in their drive for efficiency, the government has caused a serious failure in customer service, staffing, procurement and IT". Even now, with hundreds fewer jobcentres, unemployed people seeking help are facing extended trips to their nearest centres and perfunctory interviews when they do get there.

With dole queues lengthening, the government has agreed to address the shambles by taking staff levels back up to 2005 levels by, er, replacing all the jobs it cut. Not that this prevents the initial misconceived "headcount reductions" scoring as efficiency "savings" – which might explain why the government continues to resist a final audit of its alleged efficiency programme.

"Give me a progressive blue rinse"

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ABC

A WELCOME return to the public eye – and *Private Eye* – for our old friend David Burnside, the PR guru and former MP for South Antrim, who has been hired by arch-banker Sir Fred Goodwin to give his tarnished reputation a respray.

Burnside's image-enhancement skills are second to none. In the 1970s he became press officer for William Craig's Vanguard Party, an extreme unionist outfit in Northern Ireland; the party withered and died soon afterwards. As public affairs director of British Airways from 1984 to 1993, he masterminded the "dirty tricks" campaign against Virgin which culminated in BA having to pay £3.6 m to Richard Branson in libel damages and costs.

Since leaving BA, he has put his unique talents at the service of rapist tycoon Owen Oyston, offshore Tory tycoon Michael Ashcroft, creepy media tycoon David "Rommel" Montgomery and accident-prone Old Etonian Rupert Galliers-Pratt (who was censured by the Stock Exchange soon after recruiting Burnside as his PR, for "forgetting" to record 17 failed companies of which he had been a director). Thanks to him, all are now much-loved national treasures.

RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond's newspapers have come up with an ingenious wheeze to recoup some of the £550,000 they paid Kate and Gerry McCann last year, plus £375,000 to the "Tapas Seven", for many libellous pieces.

Last weekend's *Sunday Express* filled pages one and nine with an exposé of Debbie Butler, who has been distributing "highly inflammatory leaflets" suggesting that Madeleine wasn't abducted. "Kate and Gerry are very upset and angry over these despicable lies," a source close to the family told the paper, adding that legal action was likely.

The *Sunday Express* concluded by asking readers: "What do you think? Do these people have the right to peddle such vile claims against the McCanns?" If enough readers ring the premium-rate numbers to vote yes or no, Dirty Des may yet be able to award himself a bonus, with which he can pay the £1.5m bill he incurred in his recent defeat by Tom Bower. Vote early, vote often!

ORDER OF THE BROWN NOSE

"EVERYWHERE we went, before my eyes people fell in love with him. Trade union bosses, management consultants, random strangers on railway platforms – no one seemed to be immune. I've never seen anyone seduce so many people with such effortless allure – nor take such palpable pleasure in every conquest – and the intensity of his theatre is electrifying to behold. His skin is dewy, as if fresh from a spa facial, and his grooming so flawless he looks almost hyper-real, the cuff links and tie delicately co-ordinated, with their detail inversely echoed in his socks. I'd swear he even has his eyebrows shaped, though he denies it..."

– Decca Aitkenhead on Mandelson, Guardian.

Dave Snooty IS ON HOLIDAY

Street of Shame

RUPERT MURDOCH'S decision to start charging for all his news websites – and stop giving content away for free – increases the likelihood that he will close the pisspoor freesheet *thelondonpaper*.

His newly promoted *consigliere* Rebekah Brooks is no fan of free papers, blaming them for damaging sales of her beloved *Sun*. In her new capacity as chief executive of News International, she has joined the boards of News Group Newspapers, publisher of the *Sun* and *News of the Screws*, and Times Newspapers, publisher of the *Times* and *Sunday Times*. But so far she has not seen fit to sign up to the board of sister company NI Free Newspapers, publisher of *thelondonpaper*.

Her case will no doubt be strengthened by a secret internal report revealing that the paper has lost £9.1m this year – £4.1m worse than had been budgeted for – because of a shortfall in advertising and digital revenue.

SCEPTICS might scoff at the notion of microclimates – pockets of tropical warmth scattered around the country – but there are no such doubts at the *Sunday Times*, which ran a full-page news feature last weekend.

"They can make a difference to a place," estate agent Roy Bailey of Knight Frank told the paper. "The biggest problem estate agents have is proving that to people. Often the difference is quite subtle and people might just think it's a sales pitch." If these reservations on the part of buyers could be overcome, however, Bailey reckoned it could increase the value of a house by 21 percent.

Property-owners in Salcombe must have been delighted at the inclusion of the Devon town on the paper's graphic identifying three places in Britain that can lay claim to this "microclimate premium". It is, of course, entirely coincidental that *ST* editor John Witherow has a holiday home there.

"SUPERMARKET bullies can't be stopped," opined *Mail on Sunday* financial supremo Lisa Buckingham in a hand-wringing piece on 9 August about how the Office of Fair Trading's efforts to support small food suppliers are doomed.

"Sadly," she wrote, "the reality is that this will surely end as yet another stalled attempt to balance the might of Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons with that of small suppliers whose entire annual output would probably struggle to fill more than a couple of chiller cabinets."

Buckingham should know. The front page of that day's *MoS* had a giant reader promotion for, er, "£10 off your shopping at Tesco".

"TEN times more addictive than speed, longer-lasting than crack cocaine, crystal meth is on its way to the UK," shrieked the *Sun* last week. "According to police and drug charities, its use is growing at an alarming rate because it is cheap and easy to make."

What evidence did the paper have for this? Well, Louis Theroux had just done a documentary about crystal meth use in, er, America. Other than that, the claim that the drug is becoming a major problem over here is no truer now than it was when the *Telegraph* claimed in 2008 that it "is now beginning to cause havoc in Britain"; in 2007, when the *Times* warned it was "coming to a town near you" and the *Mail* declared it "Middle England's new crack cocaine"; in 2006, when the *Independent* declared that "Britain faces its deadliest drugs problem as crystal meth enters mainstream use"; when the *Independent on Sunday* forecast it was "poised to boom in the UK" in 2005; when the *People* claimed it was "flooding Britain's streets" in 2003; or when the *Sunday Mirror* said it was "about to flood Britain" in 2002.

"The facts do not support the more alarmist headlines," Martin Barnes, the chief executive of charity Drugscope, told the *Eye* last week. "There is no question that crystal meth is available in the UK, but use remains relatively rare and as yet there are no signs of increasing levels of demand or supply or associated harms."

Still, it does always make a good peg for a human-interest story, complete with harrowing "before and after" pictures, when real news is thin on the ground…

THURSDAY 13 August. The *Daily Telegraph*'s economics editor, Edmund Conway, is in cheerful mood. "Despite the governor's gloomy news yesterday," he writes, "Britain is still set to emerge from technical recession – in other words, for its economy to start expanding again – sooner than the vast majority of its Western counterparts."

Later that very day, France and Germany announce that they have emerged from recession. The UK does not.

A THOUGHTFUL contribution to the Ashes sledging debate comes from former England rugby player Brian Moore in his *Telegraph* sports column.

When it comes to abusing one's rivals, Moore argues that "there are boundaries which should not be crossed, but also that it is hellishly difficult to be precise about what they are. Most likely they are phrases that fit dictionary definitions: relating to somebody's private life, referring offensively to somebody, or unfairly remarking about or questioning others."

One phrase that might be judged to have crossed that boundary is "you fat cunt", although Moore felt no guilt about using it when signing off a furious email earlier this year to his *bête noire* at the *Daily Mail*, sports diarist Charlie Sale.

THE start of another football season is officially marked, as ever, by the return of Rod Liddle's football column in the *Sunday Times* sports section.

Surveying the lower divisions, Liddle expertly predicted that Crewe would be relegated from League One, while in League Two "Wycombe, Shrewsbury, Northampton and Bradford will occupy the top four positions come Christmas". Who can doubt it? Er, only the dozens of fans who had to point out to him that Crewe had in fact already gone down last season, while Wycombe enjoyed promotion from League Two. Buck up, Rod!

"BOSSES at Whyte and Mackay are acting shamefully by chopping 100 jobs," thundered an editorial in Scotland's *Daily Record* this month. "This is just another big firm using the credit crunch as a cover to restructure and cut costs as they slash and burn jobs along the way."

Another big firm doing precisely that is Trinity Mirror, which earlier this year announced plans to integrate the newsrooms of its Glasgow-based titles the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* and impose compulsory redundancies in order to shed nearly a third of its editorial staff, claiming it was "a response to the current economic environment".

PANIC seized many thousands of *Daily Telegraph* readers last month when Simon Heffer's Saturday column failed to appear. Had their hero gone on his annual surfing holiday in Frinton-on-Sea?

Clearly not, as he was still writing columns on other days of the week. So where oh where was the Saturday offering, which normally fills half a page?

Heffer, it seems, had gone on strike in protest at a plan by the paper's new Saturday editor, Mark "Skippy" Skipworth, to truncate the column and move it to a down-page slot – "below the fold", in trade jargon – on the op-ed page, beneath Charles Moore's Saturday sermon. "I don't *do* below-the-fold," Hefferlump informed Skippy.

A chastened Skipworth has now given Heffer the prime position instead, a spacious and lofty plinth at the top of the op-ed page, from which he can look down on Charles Moore.

HACK OF THE WEEK

"Sophisticated reporters despise the cliché about finding teddy bears at the scene of an air crash and being amazed that they had escaped unscathed. But I found it unavoidable and marvelled that miniature bottles of wine had survived intact when all those who were meant to drink them had perished."

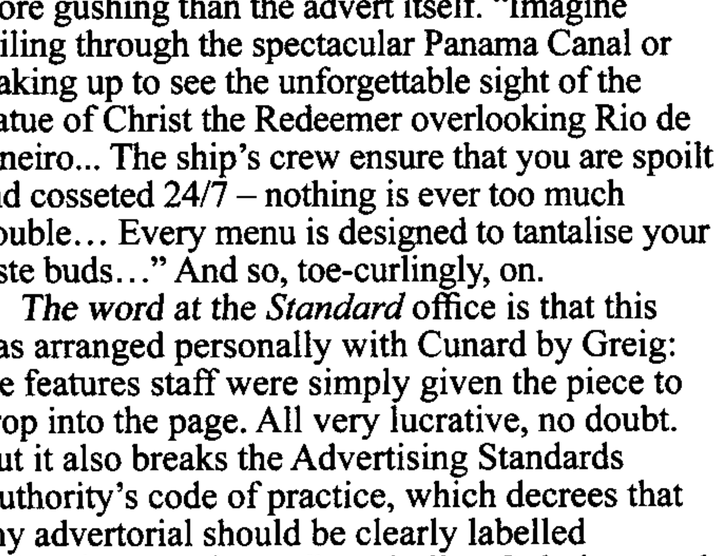
Nick Cohen shares his memories of Lockerbie, Observer

"This looks fairly safe... shall we let him off for a run?"

YET another indicator of what KGB man Alexander Lebedev and his apparatchik Geordie Greig mean when they promise the London *Evening Standard* will be relentlessly "positive". The travel section on 5 August included what appeared – from its typeface and layout – to be a feature on "the ultimate travel trip", a world cruise aboard the new *Queen Elizabeth*.

It was in fact an unmarked advertorial, neatly positioned opposite a full-page ad for the selfsame cruise. The only difference between the two was that the sales pitch in the "editorial" piece was far more gushing than the advert itself. "Imagine sailing through the spectacular Panama Canal or waking up to see the unforgettable sight of the statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooking Rio de Janeiro... The ship's crew ensure that you are spoilt and cosseted 24/7 – nothing is ever too much trouble… Every menu is designed to tantalise your taste buds…" And so, toe-curlingly, on.

The word at the *Standard* office is that this was arranged personally with Cunard by Greig: the features staff were simply given the piece to drop into the page. All very lucrative, no doubt. But it also breaks the Advertising Standards Authority's code of practice, which decrees that any advertorial should be clearly labelled "advertisement feature" or similar. Only last week the ASA gave the *Daily Express* a severe ticking-off for disguising advertorials as features, and Geordie can now expect a similar public censure. Time, perhaps, for another of the *Standard*'s poster campaigns saying "sorry" for duping its readers.



"You're taking confessional journalism to daring heights"

"THOUSANDS of the worst families in England are to be put in 'Sin Bins' in a bid to change their bad behaviour, Ed Balls announced yesterday," the *Express* frothed on 23 July. "The Children's Secretary yesterday set out £400m plans to put 20,000 problem families under 24-hour CCTV supervision in their own homes."

CCTV in our own homes? The blogosphere predictably exploded, with a Google Blog search last week turning up more than 2,000 repetitions of the story, most with the obligatory reference to Orwell. And yet not one newspaper has followed up the *Express's* astonishing scoop.

Might this have something to do with the DCSF's slight clarification of how Family Intervention Projects, which have been running since 2006, actually work: "Families will not be monitored in their own homes… this does not involve CCTV." Or even Ed Balls's own take on the story, as expressed through his official, government-approved Twitter feed: "The idea we are planning to put CCTV in families' homes is complete and total nonsense."

Have *Express* staff become so used to working for Richard Desmond – proprietor of Television X Amateur, "all about the girl-next-door, UK housewives and suburban couples who get their kicks through baring all" – that they can't conceive of a "Sin Bin" without assuming there must be a camera pointing at it?

HACKWATCH

Rubbish and Rubbisher

THERE has never been much love lost between *Sunday Times* editor John Witherow and *Grauniad* counterpart Alan "Rubbisher" Rusbridger, but full-blown hostilities have now broken out over their newspapers' coverage of each other.

It began with the *Sunday Times*'s report that bosses at the loss-making *Grauniad* want to shut the *Observer*. *Grauniad* chief Carolyn McCall felt moved to complain in a round-robin email to staff the next day that "we should not be surprised when commercial rivals seek to damage us" – despite the fact it was executives at the *Obs* who leaked the story to the *Sunday Times* in the first place.

The *Grauniad* soon hit back, gloating at length on its front page three days later when the Dirty Digger's News Corporation reported a big loss. A follow-up piece in Friday's *Guardian* reported on "plunging profits at News Corp titles", quoting extensively (and without attribution) from the last edition of the *Eye* about just how much cash the *Sunset Times* is losing.

Witherow was livid and ordered his business hacks to find another knocking piece about the *Grauniad*, which they duly did – a yarn about how the paper recently lost £24m on "botched" currency trading.

Tim Brooks, MD of Guardian News & Media, then sent a memo reassuring his hacks that the currency story was "pure rubbish". What most upset him was the fact that "quite clearly, people from this company had 'helped' the journalists with these damaging attacks. Spitting in the soup is a very distasteful habit". But he conspicuously avoided denying that the *Observer* might be killed off and replaced with a *Sunday Guardian*.

"I know this is a stressful time for everybody in GNM," he wrote. "It is more important than ever, at times like this, to keep work in perspective. So the other thing I ask you is this. Take the dog for a walk; take the kids for a swim; retune that engine; re-read Jane Austen; buy in the popcorn and have a *West Wing* box-set weekend on the sofa – please make sure you remember to do whatever it is that allows you to keep a clear head, and shake off the tensions of work."

None of which has eased the tensions of *Observer* hacks, who wonder if they'll soon have any work at all. Alan Rubbisher is always looking for grandiose projects, which are usually disastrous. He spent a fortune on Berliner presses, another fortune on the website, and yet another on lavish new offices with "pods" and "hubs". What has it all achieved? Huge financial losses and a dwindling circulation. And yet, *Observer* hacks grumble, he's still pressing ahead with schemes for world domination through the online *Guardian*, while planning to sacrifice the world's oldest Sunday newspaper.

"WE KNOW the unemployment fear of recent months is real," Dan Roberts wrote in the *Guardian* last week. For one of his colleagues, unemployment is not a fear but a reality. In his capacity as the *Grauniad/ Observer*'s "head of business pod", Roberts recently sacked the *Observer*'s highly regarded management guru, Simon Caulkin, who had written a weekly column for the past 16 years.

Although the paper has a "no compulsory redundancies" policy, Roberts exploited a loophole that Caulkin was on contract, not a full-time staffer. The money saved by firing him – he earned a modest £16,000 pa – will no doubt go towards paying for yet more layers of management.

The *Guardian*, which normally loves letters signed by dozens of academics, has so far failed to publish (or even acknowledge) the protest against Caulkin's sacking sent to editor-in-chief Alan Rubbisher. It came from professors in Melbourne, Oregon, Massachusetts, South Africa and Brazil as well as from UK universities, including Oxford, Manchester, Warwick, Leicester, East Anglia and Aberdeen. The indignant academics are now threatening a boycott of Rubbisher's papers. As they put it: "The supporters of this campaign are not just any readers, but long-standing subscribers who have passed on the habit of reading the *Guardian/ Observer* to friends, colleagues, children and (given the number of professors and authors co-signing) to students and readers also, but who are now reconsidering their loyalty."

THREE weeks ago the *Observer* ran a big story about US health firm Cigna, exposing its grossly unethical conduct and profit-driven attempts to stop America's poor accessing health benefits to which they are entitled. The firm was portrayed as a bunch of ruthless, unscrupulous bastards.

So: which major newspaper group has just sacked its full-time health-and-safety manager – the person responsible for ensuring staff get access to eye-tests, physio, treatment for stress (very popular right now), RSI etc – and contracted out the job to, er, Cigna? Another ethical "living our values" triumph for the Guardian Media Group!

WEBSITE mediaguardian.co.uk is, boasts the Guardian Media Group, guaranteed to supply "everything anyone in the media needs to know, at the click of a mouse, as soon as it happens". So what has it had to say about the biggest media story of the moment, the proposal to close the *Observer* in order to save its big-spending daily sister's bacon (see last *Eye*)?

"Guardian Media Group is reported to be considering options for the future of its Sunday newspaper," it limply reported, 24 hours after the story was broken by the *Sunday Times*. "A GMG spokesman would not confirm or deny whether the *Observer*'s future was being reviewed." That day, and those that followed it, brought nothing by way of comment from Alan Rusbridger, editor-in-chief of the two papers. Nothing? Not quite. Readers were treated to extensive quotes from the Harry Potter lookalike about his 12-part series on Classic FM, which promised to be "an eclectic and enjoyable mix of the familiar, the unexpected and the new". Well, he needs some extra pocket money to make up for the 10 percent pay cut he will take this year – which follows a pay rise in 2008/09 of, er, 11 percent.

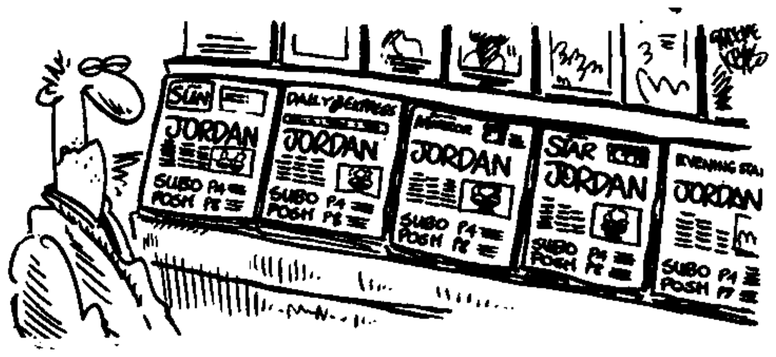
It was left to former *Guardian* editor Peter Preston to come up with some answers in his regular media column in the *Observer*. Or, er, not.

"There's a quagmire of imponderables for those who value newspapers to wade through," he spluttered. "I've been there and run things, and it wasn't at all simple."

A clue to what the future holds could be found with that day's *Observer* travel section – a vast, full-colour four-page advert for the *Guardian*'s legion of money-draining podcasts, which range from "Football Weekly" and "The Bike Podcast", to "Islamophonic" and "Sounds Jewish". "This is what the *Guardian* sounds like," the ad announced, carefully adding insult to injury.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We've put together a series of measures to ensure that those people who want to watch cricket are not disrupted by those who are simply there to have a good time." – *Steve Regan, chief executive of Yorkshire County Cricket Club.*



STREET OF SAME

SMART ATTACK

DETAILS of the suppressed report on defence spending by MoD adviser Bernard Gray, leaked to the BBC, paint a depressing if unsurprising picture.

Detailing cost and time overruns and the absence of adequate management, among other problems, the leaked documents conclude that "Smart Acquisition as a concept has made little impact since 1999 except in some cost areas, but if anything time issues are worse".

Not too clever, especially since as long as five years ago parliament's defence committee found that: "Six years ago the Ministry of Defence (MoD) introduced Smart Acquisition. Its objectives were to procure equipment faster, cheaper, better. On almost all counts, it has failed to deliver."

So where did the hare-brained idea come from? Unsurprisingly, management consultants McKinsey had more than a hand in it. It was the considered conclusion of a group made up of then defence minister John Spellar, BAE executive Kevin Smith and staff from industry and McKinsey, for whom "smart" processes were just the latest in a long line of management consultancy ideas to be sold to as many clients as possible.

Since then hundreds of millions have been spent on yet more advice on procurement and how to run the MoD, apparently beyond a total 85,000 defence civil servants. The result? A report on spending that is so damning it has to be sat on.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"EDS is recognized as the premier company delivering information and technology services to all areas of the Ministry of Defence."

– Job ad for an engineering role at everyone's favourite pisspoor IT firm.

REVOLVING DOORS

YEARS of procurement and supply cock-ups at the Ministry of Defence (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*) are no barrier to the careers of the men in charge in Whitehall. And unsurprisingly it's the firms benefiting from the multi-billion-pound budgets they controlled that are writing their new pay cheques.

Former chief operating officer of defence equipment and support **David Gould** takes up a directorship of VEGA Consulting Services, which last year earned over £10m from the MoD and is part of the Finmeccanica empire that earns more than £500m from the defence budget annually. Also stepping through the rapidly revolving door are: Major General **David Shouesmith**, formerly the assistant chief of defence staff in charge of logistics support to Iraq and Afghanistan, who becomes vice-president at defence logistics consultants PRTM; and the former director of government intelligence centre GCHQ **Sir David Pepper**, who eschews the spy novel-writing favoured by other former top spooks and gets his snout in the defence industry trough as a "strategic adviser" to consultancy firm Defence Strategy & Solutions.

Meanwhile, tax avoidance consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers have found a position as "advisory partner" for the former HMRC director general responsible for child benefit, **Mike Hanson**.

When the department lost two discs with the details of 25m people on them a couple of years ago, who should be brought in to review the fiasco but senior PwC partner Kieron Poynter and his small army of beancounters? The firm earned a handy £4m from the debacle, which should pay for Hanson's services for a few years.

BAE UNCOVERED

BAE SYSTEMS has abandoned a government insurance scheme, just as international regulators were expressing concerns that the government insurers were not investigating claims of "bribery-related fraud" on the BAE deals.

BAE Systems has faced repeated claims of corruption on the massive Saudi arms deal; it denies the allegations. In 2006, after pressure from then Prime Minister Tony Blair, a Serious Fraud Office investigation into the deal was dropped.

The Export Credit Guarantee Department (ECGD), a wing of Peter Mandelson's business department, offers insurance to help British firms win business abroad. The ECGD insured BAE's Saudi Al Yamamah deal, with accounts showing that BAE paid premiums of around £22m.

Around the time that BAE dropped this insurance, international corruption monitors from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) visited the ECGD and chided them for failing to investigate corruption allegations against BAE.

BAE told *Private Eye* there was no link between their decision and the corruption allegations. The policy lapsed in July 2008. By ending links with the ECGD, BAE has closed down one of the remaining routes for further investigation of commission payments in its Saudi deals.

HAMMOND BEGS

THERE'S one group that MPs don't mind seeing underpaid: their young office dogsbodies – sorry, interns.

Latest to advertise for some help on the cheap is the man who might soon control public spending at the Treasury: Tory shadow chief secretary Philip Hammond. He's after an unpaid "confident, hardworking" intern, ideally for "a minimum six months" to deal with "research and correspondence relating to the Treasury portfolio", "constituency casework and correspondence" and "general office administration", among other matters. Along with having rich parents, the successful candidate must be able to "learn quickly and work under pressure… on own initiative with minimal supervision".

Experts pointed out to Hammond that this is the kind of work for which, by law, the minimum wage must be paid. His response – "I would regard it as an abuse of taxpayer funding to pay for something that is available for nothing and which other members are obtaining for nothing" – is unlikely to cut the mustard with the HM Revenue & Customs investigators who police the rules.

GRANGER ON ROCKS

WITH the Tories unveiling their plan to dismantle the disastrous £12.7bn NHS national IT programme – to be replaced with the not exactly thought-through idea of handing medical records over to Google and Microsoft – what news of Richard Granger, the chief NHS IT botcher who left last year to become a health IT consultant?

The demand for his computer expertise now seems to be sadly limited, as a report from the government's advisory committee on business appointments reveals that he has become a "geological consultant", apparently trading on a 22-year-old 2:2 geology degree. Perhaps he could advise on a suitable location for burying the NHS IT project.

FOUR Unison branch secretaries who were absurdly investigated for "racism" for having likened their union's standing orders committee to the proverbial three wise monkeys who see, hear and speak no evil have taken their case to an employment tribunal.

Glenn Kelly, Onay Kasab, Suzanne Muna and Brian Debus, who last month were banned from holding union office for up to five years (*Eye* 1242), are proving to be an embarrassment for Unison general-secretary Dave Prentis.

The four – all members of the spartist Socialist Party (see *Letters*) – have produced evidence that a year after they were put under investigation for distributing the three wise monkeys cartoon – which the union claimed some may have found "racially offensive" – the union sanctioned a leaflet produced by its south-east regional disabled members committee which used the very same image of the three monkeys. Eek!

The tribunal also heard that union officials had handed out peanuts and bananas to delegates, some of whom were black, at an employers' conference. Eek! Eek! Gibber!

The case continues… to be bananas.

TROUBLE in the ranks of Merseyside firefighters after the Fire Authority sacked union official Kevin Hughes over an alleged assault on the son of a strike-breaker.

The incident is said to have taken place in a pub while Hughes was off-duty during last year's prolonged dispute. Police investigated the claim at the time and – no doubt because Hughes had the benefit of 17 witnesses, several of them independent of the fire service – decided there was no case to answer.

The authority decided otherwise – in what the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has described as a kangaroo court, which heard none of the independent evidence – and sacked him for gross misconduct. Now the FBU has put together details of four staff who, unlike Hughes, actually have convictions for crimes committed off-duty, but who never faced disciplinary action. This will form part of Hughes' appeal on the grounds of victimisation. After all, he was a "troublesome" union member; the others are not. That is if the brothers are not back on strike over the Hughes affair first.

'Blackleg'

NUMBER CRUNCHING

465,700 Total number of civil servants when Gordon Brown announced job cuts and "efficiency measures" in 2004

522,930 Total number of civil servants in 2009

"Thank you for flying British Airways – God bless you, Sir"

NUMBER CRUNCHING

19 Number of MPs in Turks and Caicos who have been removed from office and direct rule by UK imposed because of "high probability of systematic corruption or serious dishonesty" and "clear signs of political amorality"

182 Number of MPs in UK who have paid back expenses they claimed without justification

"I find it a lot scarier than a scythe"

NESTA VIPERS

WITH billions diverted to the 2012 Olympics, lottery funds aren't exactly plentiful these days. So more than an eyebrow might be raised at the way one of the bodies dishing money out to supposedly good causes has managed to channel fortunes to the pet projects and companies of its own members.

In 2008/09 the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (Nesta) promised £3m to a fund management company, MTI Partners, run by one of its own advisory committeee members, Ernie Richardson. It also found £49,000 from its hard-pressed coffers for a research business known as Library House, one of whose directors, Sherry Coutu, occupies a similar position at Nesta.

The most deserving cause of all, though, was the £250,000 found for an IT company called Gnodal Ltd, one of whose directors and investors, Adrian Beecroft, is also a Nesta advisory committee member. He also happens to have been chief investment officer of Apax Partners, the private equity firm he founded alongside Gordon Brown's confidant Sir Ronald Cohen. According to the *Sunday Times* Rich List Beecroft is worth around £50m, so obviously he needs a little help from the lottery player.

As it happens, the chief executive of Nesta is Jonathan Kestenbaum, a former bag carrier – sorry "chief of staff" – for none other than Sir Ronnie Cohen.

Nesta insists it is "satisfied that the above-mentioned transactions were entered into in the ordinary course of business, and on arm's-length terms". That's all right, then.

"I THINK we're moving away from this period where, if you like, celebrity matters," announced Gordon Brown in April 2007.

Since then he has proved his point by offering government jobs to *GMTV*'s Fiona Phillips, *House of Tiny Tearaways* presenter Tanya Byron, *Apprentice* star Alan Sugar and, last week, sacked *Strictly Come Dancing* judge Arlene Phillips, who is now the Department of Health's official "Dance Champion".

GUNS FOR HIRE

IN JULY the Foreign Office closed its public consultation on the regulation of the private military industry that it had encouraged and funded. Foreign secretary David Miliband wants the consultation to come up with his preferred solution: self-regulation.

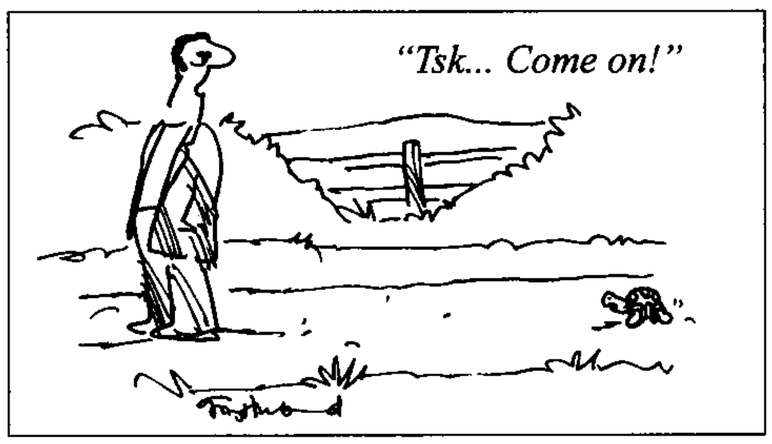
Miliband said the private military and security industry was "essential" and "inevitable", adding that military firms have "played an important role in Iraq and Afghanistan". His bid for self-regulation is based on the idea that "the UK-based industry has a favourable reputation".

One month later and Armor-Group's Danny Fitzsimmons, a guard for one of the Foreign Office's own contractors, has apparently shot dead two of his fellow guards in a drunken argument in Iraq. While this is the worst shooting incident involving the firm, it is not the first. As the Eye exclusively revealed [Eye 1200], in late 2007 one ArmorGroup guard shot an Iraqi general's driver in a reckless but thankfully not fatal incident. That guard was whisked out of Iraq and sacked, unlike Fitzsimmons, who faces the uncertainty of an Iraqi court.

Group 4 Security, which owns ArmorGroup, told Private Eye that it has a strict dry policy in Iraq which means that no alcohol is allowed either on or off duty. This policy appears to have broken down in this instance. Neither the firm nor the Foreign Office would say whether Fitzsimmons had guarded Foreign Office staff in the past, although he was not working on a British government contract at the time of the incident. Questions have been raised about his fitness for the job, given that he had recent firearms convictions in the UK.

ArmorGroup has also faced criticism over the criminal records of its guards in the past. In 2004 it emerged that one ArmorGroup guard in Iraq was a former Royal Marine who had served a four-year sentence on 10 counts of soliciting murder after he passed information to Loyalist killers in Northern Ireland.

None of this is likely to deter Miliband from his plan to allow these firms to regulate themselves through a "trade association", however. Miliband says: "Governments cannot deploy protection in all theatres." In fact, thanks to its total reliance on private mercenaries, the British government does not even protect its own diplomats in Iraq and Afghanistan, so it's unlikely to put any regulatory demands on the industry.



BUY-TO-LETDOWN

LONDONERS are bamboozled by low-cost home ownership schemes, according to an Ipsos Mori poll commissioned by the mayor Boris Johnson.

Three-quarters of respondents think you that in order to qualify you have to earn less than £30,000, half think you have to be a key worker like a nurse or a firefighter, and a third think you have to be on the council-house waiting list. In fact, any household earning less than £60,000 can apply.

BoJo sees the confusion as backing for his manifesto commitment to make any family earning less than £75,000 – all basic-rate taxpayers in a dual-income household – eligible for help. But there was less good news for the mayor when Londoners were asked about the confusing nine different schemes on offer. His own First Steps scheme, launched in March, has not exactly made a huge impact – just 2 percent knew what it was and only 12 percent had heard of it.

EU-phemisms

No matter how we've behaved they've kept their peace

HOW LOBBYING WORKS

WITH bank-friendly politicians looking thin on the ground, lobbyists for London's financial services industry have been schmoozing the city's mayor to assist them in their fight against EU regulation.

The EU's Alternative Investment Fund Managers directive, tightening up regulation on hedge funds and private equity, clearly has the sector worried. So Simon Walker, CEO of the British Venture Capital Association (BVCA), has been working hard to butter up Boris Johnson to help them make their case – as a series of brown-nosing letters released under freedom of information reveal.

Just after Boris' election, Walker wrote to congratulate him, wishing "all the very best endeavours over the next four years. As a canvasser, cyclist and a Balliol man, I was particularly delighted by your victory! Please let me know if we can ever help with something."

Last October, Walker wrote again, laying it on thick, saying he "greatly enjoyed your epic oration" at a speech to the Policy Exchange. "It's good that someone is defending the citadels of capitalism," he said, before inviting Boris to speak at the BVCA's 25th-anniversary party. "We'd be delighted if you were able to look in for a few minutes ahead of dinner, so you could be in bed with a mug of Horlicks at 11."

A month later, Walker wrote to say how "thrilled" he was at Boris's scrapping of the western extension of the congestion charge, in a letter inviting him to a private-equity conference. He wrote: "My delight that Mary [Walker's wife] will now visit her friends in Notting Hill during the week nearly outweighs the budgetary impact of her shopping moving from Hammersmith back to Kensington High Street and Chelsea." His letter continues: "This is not mere flattery."

And lo, Boris finally waded into the debate on EU regulation. On 7 July, the mayor met Walker, along with Paul Marshall of the Alternative Investment Management Association, representing hedge funds. Minutes of the meeting show that on the agenda was "What can/should the mayor do to negate the impact" of the EU directive, and whether it should be "modified or abandoned altogether".

Some 36 hours after the meeting, Boris huffed and puffed on the *Today* programme: "I don't say this in any particular spirit of perverse wanting to stick up for bankers, but it is very important that we defend an industry that generates huge sums of tax for this country."

Women real ale drinkers double in size

Morning Star

EYE TV

Future of Food (BBC2)

SPARE a thought for the humble newsreader, the forgotten packhorse of TV's industrial devolution.

Once merely a be-suited conduit of fact, the new model newsreader has been corralled into a whirl of renaissance activity. With ratings paramount, he must present himself as a multi-platform, high-performance celebrity player: as comfortable in panel-show scrubs as he is scratching his knees behind an MDF desk in White City. Thus, Kate Silverton is regularly photographed without her glasses; Katie Derham competed in reality series *Maestro*, and came fourth; Trevor McDonald reads jokes from autocues at inappropriate awards ceremonies.

So what, then, of George Alagiah? Cuddly George, the BBC's one-man Six O'Clock News hospice: ministering tirelessly to the needy with his blanket-soft vowels and there-there-dear approach to reports on international terrorism and financial catastrophe. What fresh pastures might await this ambassador of broadcasting reassurance; which gleaming vehicles might beckon from fame's concourse?

Enter BBC2's **Future of Food**. "Tonight I reveal the global food security crisis and what it could mean for the food on our plates," he announced in the opening episode, before adding, apropos of nothing, that the London market through which he was striding was "not very far from where I live, actually". A coincidence? Hardly. With this disclosure, the vibe was established. This was not just any three-part trudge through a vexed political and scientific issue. This was George Alagiah's three-part trudge through a vexed political and scientific issue: a vital distinction that would foster a sense of newsreader-next-door chumminess while placating those who prefer their politics and science served warm, with cream, by someone familiar and smiley off the telly.

To this end, there were scenes of ordinary George shopping in his local supermarket, caring George sharing potato waffles with a family from Cambridge, concerned George staring morosely at the carcasses of Kenyan cattle and cheeky George giggling as he owned up, prior to a consultation with a dietician, to "the extra beers I had at a school reunion". But while the emphasis on the newsreader's Everyman status grated, the manner in

"Hey, guys, Jake still watches television on a television!"

which its facts were dispensed catapulted *Future of Food* into a whole new orbit of aggravation.

Clearly, someone had forgotten to tell George that *Future of Food* was a prime-time BBC2 production "revealing", as he'd so eloquently foretold, the "global food security crisis", and not a CBBC series aimed at restless seven- to 11-year-olds.

Are you sitting comfortably? Then George will begin.

"I'm setting off on a journey to see if world food production can keep pace with rising demand," he cooed over a cup a tea in a greasy spoon (subtext: George Alagiah OBE is a man of the people). First stop? "Delhi, capital of India."

Talking with a landowner, George learnt that a rapidly depleting water table is leading Punjab farmers toward drought, debt and suicide. George adjusted his panama hat and nodded sombrely. The facts came in thick and fast. More than a billion people do not have access to safe water. Global water consumption is predicted to double every 20 years. Everyone in the UK uses around 3,000 litres of foreign water a day. They were big facts, but they bobbed like croutons in a consommé of and-then-whatness, their existence wholly unsupported by a sustained, coherent argument. Throughout it all George maintained an air of benign concern, his characteristically leisu...re...ly...deli...v... ery ensuring that one of the planet's most complex and alarming political and financial challenges was reduced to a series of friendly public-information films: Snackanory, if you will.

While the science wore inflatable armbands and sploshed in the shallow end, *Future of Food*'s politics hid behind the sofa with its fingers in its ears. George's interviewees were restricted to the briefest of appearances, their responses snipped into urgent, hand-waving soundbites. Hilary Benn told us that the global food crisis of 2008 was "a wake-up call", and that dealing with future food distribution was "going to be a big challenge". Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, opined that there was "every reason to be quite worried about food security". But the soundbites just sat there. With no follow-up questions, they were left to stamp in a puddle of their own profundity – their existence succeeding only in extracting another clang from the ever-present *Future of Food* funeral bell.

Just who was this guff aimed at? Children? Too boring. Idiots? Too many big numbers. George fans? Not enough revealing leisurewear. Still, at least one of us had been enlightened.

"If I had to sum up what I've learnt so far," concluded George, slowly, before drifting off into a cosy freeform summation of the programme's most obvious bits, "much of what we eat *isn't doing our planet any good*".

Inexplicably, he failed to add: "And I now realise that I should've listened to my agent when she advised me to take the *Dancing on Ice* gig instead." Such is the plight of the new model newsreader. A plight about which, coincidentally, it is increasingly difficult to give a flying potato waffle.

'Doofer'

AFTER SPENDING YEARS HELPING TO INFLATE PROPERTY PRICES...
SHE'S BACK AGAIN
Location Location Location
TRYING TO GET PEOPLE TO BUY HOUSES THEY CAN'T AFFORD
NEGATIVE EQUITY
Desirable Channel 4 Contract
Ken Pyne

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: In literature, which boy's name precedes "Sand" and "Eliot" to make the pen-names of two 19th-century female authors?

Contestant: Billy.

AR: Which ballet by Tchaikovsky is also the name of an instrument used to break open snacks such as almonds?

Contestant: Hammer.

AR: What variety of large white bear can be found in the Arctic region?

Contestant: Penguin.

MEDIA NEWS

A BBC employee, Isabel Cosgrove, complains to in-house newspaper *Ariel* that the Beeb has refused to pay for flowers at the funeral of a recently deceased colleague, even though senior executives are happy to send gifts of flowers, chocolates, candles and so on to star presenters. This bizarre state of affairs merits a response from Zarin Patel, the BBC's chief financial officer, who declares – amazingly – that this is just how it should be.

"Our staff are very important to us and they make the BBC what it is but it is still hard to justify to the licence fee payer the purchase of gifts for staff from licence fee funds," Patel says, explaining why she deems it inappropriate to pay for flowers at a funeral. "Flowers and other gifts are however occasionally purchased for talent to mark notable successes and significant events. This helps the BBC in the building and nurturing of relationships and collaborations to bring the best performers to air and is usual amongst this community." But not usual, it seems, at a "significant event" such as a funeral for a loyal employee who has died in service.

GOING LIVE

THE BBC News Channel's John Kay is providing a suitably respectful commentary at the funeral of Britain's last First World War veteran, Harry Patch, in Wells.

"What do you think he would have made of these tributes?" he asks a friend of the 111-year-old.

"He would be very proud – but I don't think we should be talking during the one-minute silence," comes the reply.

BACK in April we reported on a Radio 1 TV ad that had been made but not broadcast by the BBC... on the grounds that it "looked too expensive" (*Eye* 1234).

Now that the rabid scrutiny of the BBC's spending has died down, the ad is finally making its debut. Not in its original form, of course – to deflect attention, they've chopped the original 60-second film into bits. The first two, featuring indie DJ Zane Lowe exploding flour bombs in slow motion and drivetime card Scott Mills dressed as a knight emerging from a lake, are now on the station's website.

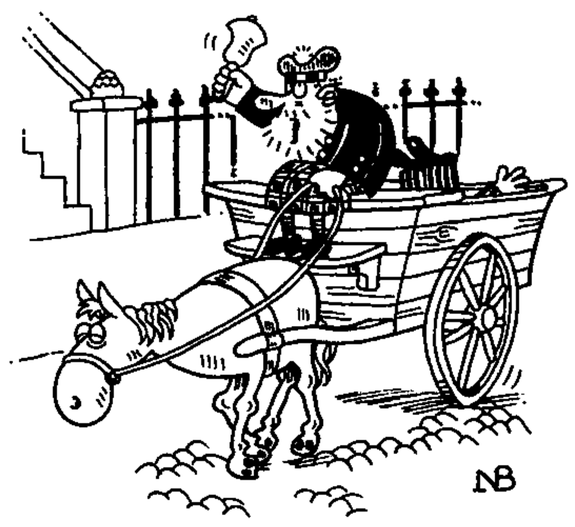
Fearne Cotton and Chris Moyles' scenes will follow, but one segment is unlikely ever to be shown. It features morning host Jo Whiley. Unfortunately, since the ad was made, she has been dropped by the station. So rather than not broadcast something because it looked too expensive, the BBC won't be able to broadcast something that *was* expensive.

"COMIC tearaway Dennis the Menace has been turned into Walter the Softy by politically correct BBC bosses," roared the *Sun* in a fit of silly-season rage last week. "Dennis is no longer slippered by his dad as a punishment."

"The *Beano* character has been 're-imagined' for a new politically correct series," thundered an equally outraged *Mail*.

This Dennis the Menace was, presumably, unrelated to the Dennis the Menace who the *Daily Mail* reported in July 2008 had "swapped corporal punishment for political correctness", or the one who the *Sun* noted in October 2007 was "returning to TV after a decade – with a politically correct image". Or even the one who appeared in what the *Sun* claimed was "The *Beano*: New and Seriously Politically Correct" in July 2003. Or even the 58-year-old cartoon character who has not received a slippering from his father since the *Beano* removed corporal punishment from its pages in, er, the early 1980s.

Edinburgh Special



"Bring out your stand-up comedians"

BIRTSPEAK 2.0

Job Designation: Assistant Content Producer (SEO), Navigation and Services

Multiplatform Productions brings together creative teams from drama, entertainment, comedy and factual for the first time into one centre of excellence for multiplatform content creation. It's the hub for co-ordinating development innovation and production modernisation across Vision as a group, providing its expertise and creativity to projects in all genres.

The Navigation and Services division of MPP sits across the department providing centralised knowledge and support for everything MPP produces. A User Building team has been set up within Navigation and Services to create and implement ways of helping license [sic] fee payers find content.

– BBC job advert

JUST FANCY THAT!

House prices to fall further 3pc

Daily Telegraph 10/8/09 page 8

House prices 'will rise' over next year

Daily Telegraph 10/8/09 page B2

AD NAUSEAM

AFTER an injurious Food Standards Agency report earlier this month that said organic food had no nutritional benefits beyond normal products, Organic Inc is fighting back. How? By spending £1m on an ad campaign.

Sustain, the umbrella group for progressive food and farming organisations, is co-ordinating the campaign on behalf of brands including Green & Black's (owned by Cadbury Schweppes) and Rachel's (owned by US dairy giant Dean Foods).

The campaign has not yet been put out to tender, which might give the organic lobby time for a salutary rethink. Given that the reason most often cited for not buying organic food is its cost, perhaps that £1m would be better spent on cutting prices?

"HIGH definition – now it's for everyone," is Sky's current strap to go with its latest attempt to get us to shell out once again for a more detailed picture of the same old crap. In among Sky's usual range of deals was a TV ad promising free installation with an HD box priced at £49.

Oops! Last week the ASA banned the ad because it turned out that free installation was only available to new customers. High definition, in other words, is not for everyone, especially if they made the mistake of being loyal Sky customers.

REINVENTING THE WHELAN

LIKE Michael Corleone in the last reel of the *Godfather*, Labour is going for all its media enemies in its last days in power.

The latest journalist to be hit is Fraser Nelson of the *Spectator*. Carter-Fuck is threatening to take Nelson to court for causing its client Charlie Whelan distress and embarrassment when he accused him of possessing a bullying manner.

The case promises to be one of the legal wonders of the age. Labour MPs will at last be able to judge whether Whelan is capable of feeling embarrassment. Meanwhile, his attempt to sue a journalist for accusing him of aggressive behaviour will be watched with the keenest of interest by every political reporter in Westminster.

Whelan is contesting a passing reference in a *Spectator* blog post about a complaint against him from three of his fellow workers at the political department of the Unite trade union. One, Sarah Merrill, described in a written statement "a real culture of fear, and a climate of bullying that he [Mr Whelan] allows to take place in his department, which is totally at odds with the policies of the union, and indeed is totally against the principles established under any dignity-at-work procedures." Unite said at the time that complainants were off work with "stress" but dismissed as "absolute nonsense" claims that Whelan had bullied staff or pushed them to adopt a pro-Brown line.

The union has settled the grievance, but no one doubts that Whelan and his master Gordon Brown have many reasons to want to "get" Nelson. The *Eye* has been told that Whelan is making it clear that he has not forgotten or forgiven how Nelson hit on the rawest of Labour nerves when he recently described how the Brownites used their control of the Labour machine to keep the Great Helmsman in power.

With a massive overdraft, Labour is dependent on union money. Unite is the biggest union and Whelan runs its political office. Nelson quoted Blairite ministers who complained that Unite placemen were all over the Labour party, and added that Labour's supposedly independent elected officials feared their power.

If Nelson needs witnesses, he need only glance across the *Spectator*'s offices to the desk of Martin Bright. Until last year, he was political editor of the *New Statesman*. But as we reported (*Eye* 1209), he crossed Brown by criticising his rule and by presenting a Channel 4 documentary which investigated Ken Livingstone's use of public money for political purposes and his alliances with ultra-reactionary Islamists.

The Brownites were incensed that Bright had produced a hard-hitting programme on the eve of Livingstone's fight with Boris Johnson, particularly when Brown's loyal follower Geoffrey Robinson was the *Statesman*'s owner. At the 2008 British Press Awards ceremony, Whelan lectured Vanessa Thorpe, the *Observer*'s arts correspondent and Bright's wife, on why he wanted the father of her children fired. "I'm no fan of Livingstone but Martin Bright should not be political editor after what he did," Whelan rambled in front of witnesses. "You can see that. I'm going to talk to Geoffrey. He can't allow this. He can't allow criticism of Gordon. If Geoffrey's got any sense, he'll listen."

After months of management pressure, Bright resigned.

As luck would have it, just before Whelan's libel threat landed, Nelson, Bright and other hacks had signed a round-robin defending Quentin Letts of the *Mail*, who had also infuriated the Broonites with his criticisms of the disgraced Speaker Martin. Lord Sugar of the *Apprentice*, Brown's new "enterprise tsar", had ordered the City law firm Herbert Smith to hit Letts with a writ. Letts had said Sugar was a "telly peer" who "doesn't seem to have an enormous intellect" on LBC talk radio. But instead of suing the station, Sugar sued Letts personally. Sugar is demanding that Letts pay his legal costs to date, donate a sum of money to charity and agree to give a written undertaking never to criticise him again, or face financial ruin in the libel courts.

In their letter defending Letts, the journalists say that "if parliamentarians are now going to threaten to sue individual journalists personally, members of the press will be inhibited from scrutinising them in future."

As Nelson and Bright ought to know by now, stopping the press scrutinising him is precisely what Gordon Brown wants to do.

'Ratbiter'

OBN

"This show is the biggest thing that has ever happened to me. It's astonishing. Let's face it. Simon Cowell is looking down at God, judging him. To be around that is incredibly exciting, and an honour."

DANNII MINOGUE
Grazia Magazine

Submitted by Rhian Williams

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

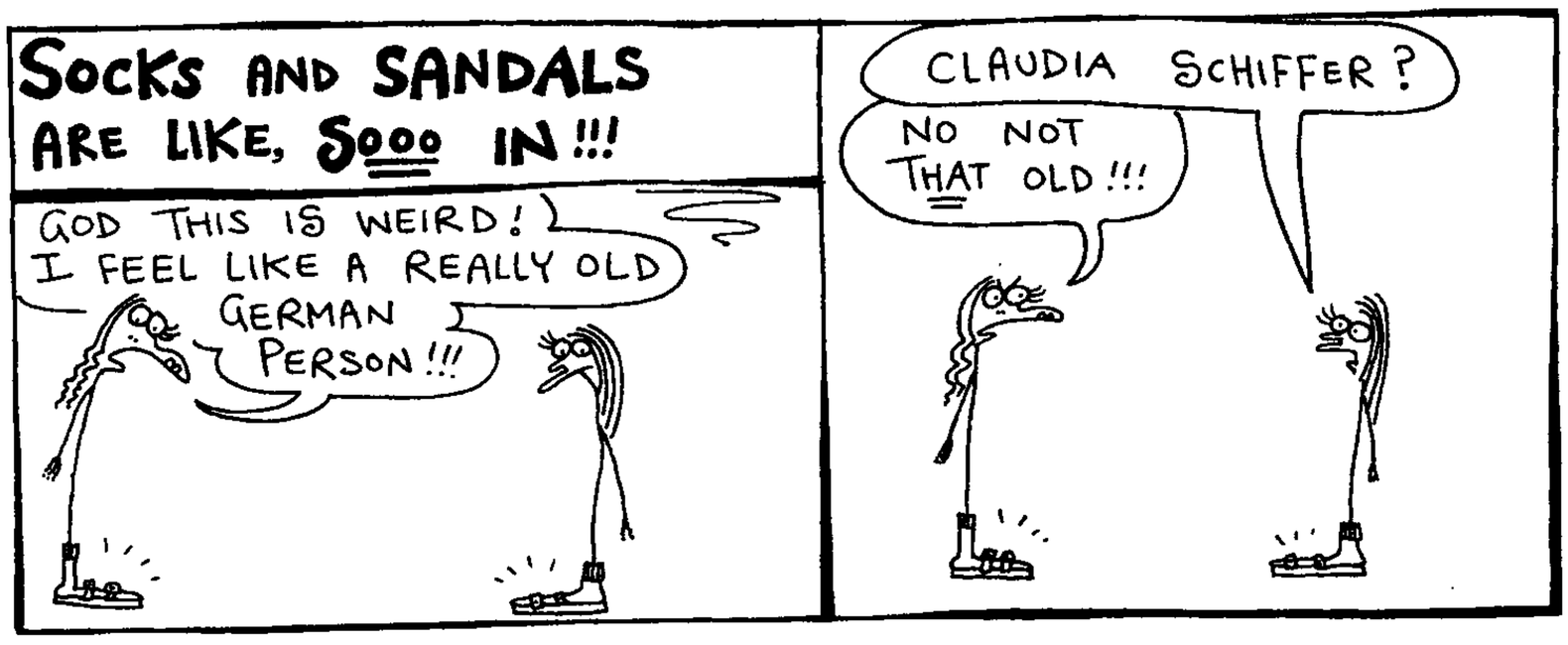
NUMBER CRUNCHING

1,735 Total number of deaths worldwide this year of people infected with swine flu, for which vaccine is being rushed out

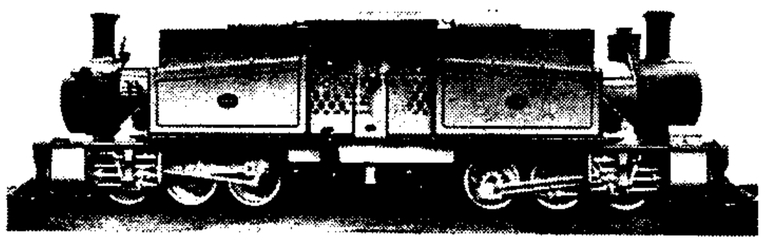
881,000 Total number of deaths worldwide last year of people infected with malaria, for which vaccine testing will take "some years"

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


SOCKS AND SANDALS ARE LIKE, SOOO IN!!!
GOD THIS IS WEIRD! I FEEL LIKE A REALLY OLD GERMAN PERSON!!!
CLAUDIA SCHIFFER?
NO NOT THAT OLD!!!

SIGNAL FAILURES



Expert export

BRITAIN may have lost most of the manufacturing that drove its export trade, but now it's shipping out expertise in privatised rail instead.

This month Richard Bowker leaves National Express Group to help set up a United Arab Emirates railway. He loathed criticism when he led the government's Strategic Rail Authority. After a magazine reported the views of Rail Freight Group chairman Tony Berkeley, the SRA cancelled an interview with Bowker and sacked Berkeley's wife, an SRA director (compensating her with public cash for unfair dismissal). The SRA's communications boss told the editor: "I am so fed up with this Tony Berkeley shite that you've printed this month. He is a fucking dilettante." (See *Eye* 1075 for the full rant.)

Bowker should be happier in the UAE, where a draft law on press freedom was censured this year by Human Rights Watch for "insulation of public officials from criticism" and where a newspaper was closed for 20 days last month for a critical article on royal racehorses.

Also moving overseas is former London Midland Trains boss Steve Banaghan. Just 62 percent of LMT's Euston trains were punctual in January, because of Network Rail's botched west-coast mainline upgrade and "weaknesses in our management processes", as LMT put it.

Down Under, meanwhile, opposition politicians in Melbourne are baffled that Andrew Lezala was chosen to lead a revival of local railways. Lezala was previously chief executive of London Underground consortium Metronet, and pocketed a £500,000 payoff after Metronet collapsed in 2007. At least locals won't have high expectations: Melbourne trains were previously operated by Connex, a byword for travel misery in England before it was kicked out in 2003. Connex took over Melbourne trains in 2002 from… National Express Group.

● NEG tried to renegotiate its Melbourne rail contracts before deciding to stop financing them and forfeit a £48m performance bond. Now the same NEG threatens to stop financing its UK east-coast mainline franchise and forfeit a £32m performance bond, having failed to "agree a solution" with the government.

MINISTERS and mandarins think electrification is about passenger trains from London. For decades they've rejected electrification of lines that don't reach London but do connect electrified mainlines or lead to ports and other freight terminals.

If a 300-mile freight run involves five miles of unelectrified track, swapping electric and diesel locomotives wastes money and time. So freight companies have bought hundreds of go-anywhere diesels for British lines since privatisation, but no new electric locos.

Department for Transport official Stuart Baker told the Railway Study Association that a freight train pulled by an electric loco can be just as fast from Preston to Carlisle as a Virgin Pendolino which stops at three intermediate stations. That's 40 minutes (more than 50 percent) faster than the same freight train with a diesel loco, yet electric locos are scarce on the west-coast line, where capacity improvement was a key aim of the painful £9bn upgrade. Capacity is affected by the big speed gap between slowest and fastest trains – if all the trains ran at similar speeds, the tracks would accommodate more of them.

DafT belatedly acknowledged the problem last month, agreeing to electrify a short track so passenger trains from Manchester airport to Glasgow could be electrics instead of diesels (but only by diverting them off the Bolton line, which has cried out for electrification for 30 years).

Alas, DafT reverts to type in its Great Western electrification plan. It says freight companies will have the chance to cut their costs by using electric locos on the GW line "where possible", but link lines (eg Reading-Basingstoke, Oxford-Coventry, Newbury-Westbury) aren't slated for electrification, so we won't get the benefits of more electric freight trains cutting pollution, increasing track capacity and replacing more lorries.

'Dr B Ching'

MEDICINE BALLS

Eye Eye

TWO cheers for the NHS National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) for funding a trial comparing two drugs for the treatment of wet AMD, a common cause of blindness.

Lucentis (£700 a dose) and Avastin (£70 a dose) are very similar chemically and both seem to halt the progression of the disease. Even without a recession, the first-choice drug for NHS treatment would appear to be a no-brainer, but there's a problem. Avastin isn't licensed for the purpose.

Both drugs were created by the same company, Genentech. Avastin is co-marketed by Roche and Lucentis by Novartis, but Genentech takes its share of the profits and there is no financial incentive to have Avastin licensed for AMD as it would destroy the market for Lucentis. NICE doesn't even look at unlicensed drug treatments, but Avastin has been widely used off-licence both privately and in parts of the NHS before Lucentis was launched and since, to save money.

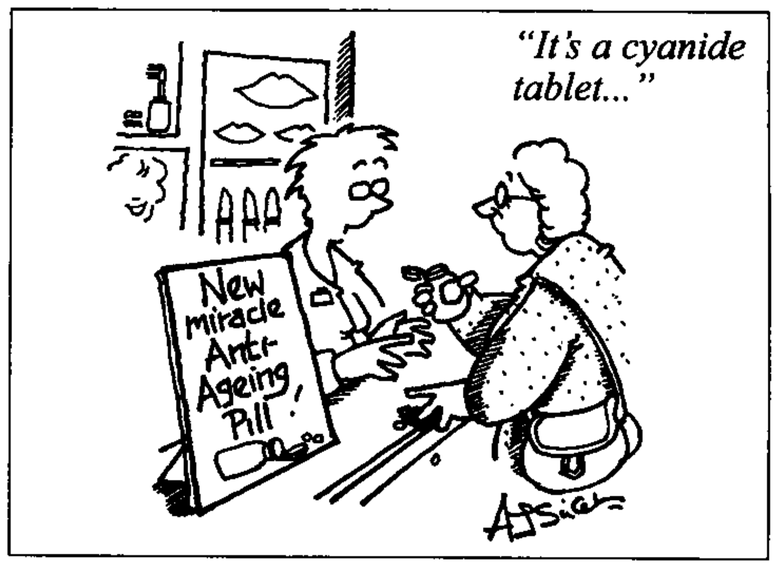
Only the state or charities can fund trials the drug industry doesn't approve of, and the NIHR has dipped into its "health technology assessment programme" to fund a randomised head-to-head comparison of the two drugs – 25 hospitals will be monitoring the effectiveness and dosage regime of about 20-30 patients over a two-year period. The trial is called IVAN and has its own website (www.ivan-trial.co.uk). The industry has criticised the trial heavily, not least because of its modest size, but the site provides reasonable responses to the criticisms.

For patients with wet macular degeneration, the trial offers treatment with one or other of the drugs (ie no one gets the placebo), and joining the trial is one way of guaranteeing treatment in an NHS still rationed by postcode. Alas, you're unlikely to have found out about it unless your hospital contacted you directly or you support the Macular Disease Society. Although the IVAN trial is NHS-funded, it makes no appearance either on the NIHR website or the NHS Choices website. So most patients with AMD don't know that it's going on.

For those outside the trial, NICE has approved Lucentis for treatment of wet AMD under strict conditions. Initially, you had to go blind in one eye before it was cost-effective to save the other (that's economic modelling for you). After a PR disaster, NICE altered the terms but they are still fairly stringent. In the eye to be treated, all the following circumstances must apply: the best-corrected visual acuity is between 6/12 and 6/96; there is no permanent structural damage to the central fovea; the lesion size is less than or equal to 12 disc areas in greatest linear dimension; there is evidence of recent presumed disease progression. If you think this might be you, see a doctor while you still can.

NICE also negotiated a system of co-payment with Novartis, ensuring the manufacturer picks up the Lucentis tab if more than 14 injections are needed. This is a clever way of getting Novartis to justify the high cost of the drug, but suggests that the profits for the first 14 treatments are so high, they will easily offset any additional treatment. Drug companies have economic models too.

M.D.



ECO GNOMICS

AS CONCERN about climate change grows, it's good to see even the petrol-head community doing its bit.

Take Maximillion Cooper's Gumball 3000 car rally, the annual event in which several D-list celebrities race 3,000 miles every May, with revellers stopping off to sip champagne in luxury hotels along the route. Not the most fashionable thing to be seen doing these days. Presumably this is why Gumball has developed an environmental policy.

"Our business has an impact on the environment through the energy and natural resources we use and the waste we generate. We are committed to reducing these impacts," promises the Gumball website. The policy then becomes somewhat sparse on detail, essentially mentioning two or three occasions in the past six years when one driver entered a vaguely green alternative fuel vehicle for the rally. According to Gumball, these piffling gestures made the rally "a cool platform for automotive manufacturers to showcase their environmentally friendly vehicles".

All very noble. But how does Gumball offset all the tons of CO_2 produced, not just by the cars during the race itself but also by transporting them all by plane to and from the rally? Gumball claims it has "purchased a wind farm to make the company and events carbon-neutral".

Really? Admittedly, there is a tenuous link between Gumball and wind energy in the sense that Max Cooper's father-in-law is a Dane called Kim Brangstrup, who is chief executive of a Scandinavian renewable energy company. But how Cooper can claim to have bought a wind farm is unclear. And even if he had, as Gumball does not measure its carbon footprint it's impossible to know by how much any such farm would offset the event's emissions.

Doubtless this will provide food for thought for the Danish government as it hosts the UN Climate Summit in December. Not least because next year the Gumball rally hopes to pass through Denmark on to Stockholm before flying its cargo of polluting cars to Boston!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"If the agency fulfils its brief successfully… expect regular PR plugs for seafood as part of a 'healthy and affordable' diet." – *Eco Gnomics on a PR push for seafood, Private Eye 1242, on sale 5 August*

"Eating oily fish can help ensure a long life as it slashes the risk of heart failure by a third, scientists have discovered." – *Daily Express front page, 5 August*

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

LA DONNA E MOBILE

DESPITE all the fuss over MPs' expenses, there are still some politicians who don't quite seem to get the distinction between public and private expenditure.

Take Lincolnshire Tory county councillor Pauline Watson, who last year spent hundreds of pounds of taxpayers' money on hundreds of late-night phone calls... to just one mobile number. Mrs Watson, the councillor for Louth, has a dedicated phone line for council business in her home as part of a broadband package paid for by the council.

Phone bills run up by Lincolnshire councillors reveal that Cllr Watson's were between 10 and 20 times higher than any of her colleagues'. Itemised bills showed she was making numerous late-evening calls to the same number, night after night.

The quarterly bill sent by BT to the council in January showed that in the period November 2008 to January 2009 Cllr Watson made 576 calls to the mobile – lasting 112 hours in total – at a cost to the taxpayer of £545.46. In contrast, she used the line to make just 42 local calls to constituents, for just over two hours in total.

The total for the year was £872 on 957 calls to the mobile phone, which lasted 178 hours. She did, however, make 80 calls to constituency-area numbers (sometimes two a week!) lasting two hours and 44 minutes in the course of the year.

Cllr Watson refused to speak to the *Eye*, referring us to the council's "media relations manager", Karen Spencer, so we have been unable to ascertain what council business required so much time late at night on the dog and bone. Ms Spencer suggests it was all a misunderstanding, and that Cllr Watson thought all calls on the phone line – including to mobiles – were free. She said the councillor had paid or would be paying "some" of it back, although she did not provide any evidence of this. How much? The people of Louth, who once had the privilege of being represented in parliament by Jeffrey Archer, may think they should be told.

● **CONSERVATIVE Weston-super-Mare councillor Peter Bryant is at a loss to understand why some of his constituents are offended by the sticker, bought by a friend in America, he has attached to his car:**

Don't they know that, if voters expect councillors to listen to their views, then councillors should be allowed to let voters know what they think of them, too?

GOD AND MAMMON

WHEN Calderdale council's standards committee recommended the authority go along with the Local Government Association's guideline of a 4.6 percent increase in members' allowances (*Eye* 1243), it was left to each individual councillor's conscience on whether to accept it, given that in these hard times most council employees are being forced to accept just 1 percent.

For 23 of the 51 councillors it was no contest – they took the money. This caused local uproar, with the public calling for them to resign.

To their defence has come the vicar of Halifax, the Rev Hilary Barber. In his parish magazine, he writes: "My fear is that the media has totally undermined public confidence in those who have given genuinely of their time and talents for the benefit of others." Indeed. Rev Barber knows about giving his time and talents for the benefit of others. He is one of a number of lay people co-opted from the community to sit on council committees. In fact, he chairs the very standards committee which made the recommendation to accept the 4.6 percent, which was also payable to co-opted committee members such as, er, the vicar.

Rev Barber has made much of not retaining his increase but giving it to charity. Might he also like to donate the "special responsibility allowance" he receives for chairing the standards committee? Last year he was paid £7,496 to chair a committee which only met nine times, netting the vicar more than £830 a pop. Render unto Caesar, etc.

PS: Councillor Paul Rogan of the English Democrats (aka "BNP Lite") – who earlier this year suggested Calderdale councillors accept a 10 percent pay *cut* – has, er, accepted the 4.6 percent rise.

He told the *Halifax Courier*: "I voted against the increase... but as a general principle, all councillors should be treated the same. If there is a going rate for being a councillor, that is the going rate." Good to know someone has a firm grasp of matters of principle!

● GEORGE SORIAL, billionaire Donald Trump's representative on Earth in Scottishland, is irate that four members of Aberdeenshire council, instead of being cow'rin tim'rous beasties like their colleagues, continue to oppose his master's vulgar plan for a £1bn golf hotel and holiday homes resort which will despoil a beautiful stretch of coast at Balmedie.

Lib Dems Martin Ford, Sam Coull, Debra Storr and Paul Johnston are tabling a motion which would prevent the council using compulsory purchase orders to force from their homes residents living on 100 acres which Trump covets, in addition to the 1,400 he already controls (*Eye* 1242). This batsqueak of opposition to the power of the Trump dollar is an outrage to Sorial. He wants the four banned from any participation in the planning process. "Enough is enough," he declared last week. "The organisation will no longer tolerate their lack of respect for

City chief's first day in the office

THE new chief executive of Derby City Council began work yesterday.

Adam Wilkinson, 45, replaces Ray Cowlishaw, who retired in June.

His salary will be £160,000 a year.

Mr Wilkinson said: "I'm looking forward to earning more about Derby."

Derby Telegraph

ethical standards. These scoundrels have to be stopped."

Scoundrels, eh? Nominate that man for a Rotten Boroughs brass-neck award immediately!

TREASURE ISLAND

THE truth about the appointment of Deborah Cameron as temporary deputy children's services director on the Isle of Wight gets even murkier.

Eye 1240 reported how she had been recruited on £750 a day after getting an "excellent" reference from IoW's finance director, Dave Burbage. Puzzling, as he was chief executive at the London Borough of Newham 10 years ago, when Ms Cameron had to resign as director of social services after damning reports by the Audit Commission and the Social Services Inspectorate into the quality of the borough's children's services.

A spokesman for Ms Cameron's most recent previous employer, the substance-abuse charity Addaction, described her departure in February as "with immediate effect after discussions with the trustees". Did this mean she was sacked? All the spokesman would say was that those were the words agreed with Cameron's solicitors.

Now Ms Cameron is trousering £54,000 for six months' part-time work, three times the average Isle annual wage. Meanwhile IoW chief executive Steve Beynon is also doling out £650 a day, plus exes and up to £200-a-day agency fees, to Brian "Tumbleweed" Edwards as temporary assistant education director, following a busy recent career around the country with Nottingham, Northumberland and Bedfordshire councils.

FACT: Peterborough council has advertised for a similar post to Ms Cameron's, full-time, at up to £79,000 a year, and Stoke-on-Trent for one at £85,000 a year – less than half the Isle of Wight's generous rate. Both authorities have higher star ratings and larger populations than the island.

● A LESSON from Lewisham in how to handle the bereaved.

Earlier this year Cyril Dadson, 92, a resident of sheltered accommodation run by Lewisham council, died. His son Robin, who lives in Devon, quickly sorted out his father's outstanding affairs and returned his flat's keys to the council. But a couple of months later Dadson Jnr received a letter addressed to "Mr Cyril Dadson - deceased". It demanded rent for a period after the keys had been handed back to the council.

When Robin Dadson pointed out that the letter was clearly a mistake, the council apologised. Several weeks passed, then more letters arrived in Devon – this time demanding unpaid council tax for his late father's home. Mr Dadson contacted Lewisham again and reminded them his disabled father had been exempt from council tax. This did not stop the council then sending him a further letter, informing him that "the money was due, as although exempt from council tax whilst alive, he became liable once dead". Glad that's sorted out.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WELL THAT'S THE LAST TIME WE USE A NO FRILLS AIRLINE!
THE LACK OF LEGROOM WAS FRANKLY CRIMINAL! WE COULD SUE...
PASSPORT CONTROL
DUTY FREE
YOU DON'T THINK YOU'VE DEVELOPED DEEP-VEIN THROMBOSIS DO YOU?
NO. BUT OUR HAND-TAILORED JAPANESE DENIM TROUSERS ARE RUINED!
THESE PEOPLE HAVE NO REGARD FOR HIGH QUALITY STARCHED FABRIC...

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE recession may be causing the cancellation or postponement of many building projects (usually a mercy), but there seems to be no shortage of scandals concerning the demolition of fine buildings – particularly by local authorities. Perhaps that is because it is always much cheaper and easier to destroy than to build.

One such case is in Nelson, Lancashire, a late-Victorian cotton-mill town near Colne that has long been in decline. It's run by Pendle borough council, which eight years ago achieved considerable notoriety by the attempt to bulldoze swathes of solidly built and popular stone terraced housing in the Whitefield area near the town centre. Having declared the area around St Mary's Church (redundant, of course) a conservation area, it declined to extend protection to similar Victorian housing extending towards the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, proposing instead to make it a clearance area.

Interestingly, these threatened houses in Nelson were exclusively occupied by Asian families. However, this crass attempt at architectural and ethnic cleansing was vigorously opposed by English Heritage, the Victorian Society and Save Britain's Heritage, and was abandoned after a public inquiry.

Thwarted, Pendle council is clearly itching to destroy something. After allowing the steady degradation of the town's fabric for decades, it has decided to pick on the former Palace Theatre, which it recently purchased. The exterior had already been spoiled when the entrance and flanking shops were removed for road-widening in 1979. But the auditorium, although altered, is essentially intact and could easily be restored.

Palace Theatre, Nelson, Lancs

The theatre was designed by the architects Matthew, Watson, Landless & Pearce and has fine internal plasterwork by AR Dean & Co. It opened as a variety theatre in 1909 and was later a cinema; it closed as a bingo hall earlier this year. The Theatres Trust is opposing the proposed imminent demolition, and English Heritage is considering whether the interior is eligible for spot-listing.

Astonishingly, Stephen Barnes, chief executive of Pendle council, claims: "We have a proven track record of protecting our heritage assets which are worthy of preservation." Clearly he doesn't think much in Nelson is worthy of preservation.

Nevertheless, the council has commissioned a "masterplan" for the town from the Glasgow-based consultancy firm WMUD. Naturally it involves making a new "civic space", ie demolishing more buildings. The aim of the Pendle Regeneration Strategy is to "create and maintain vibrant commercial town centres that support the local economy, attract local people, visitors and new businesses and which form the basis of civic pride and identity".

An intelligent, responsible local authority would surely regard a surviving, atmospheric early-20th-century theatre auditorium as an irreplaceable asset. But the brutes who run Pendle merely propose to demolish it to create – guess what? – a *temporary car park* as part of its wretched masterplan.

AN EVEN more outrageous case of gratuitous vandalism is taking place in Scotland.

Moat Brae House in George Street, Dumfries, is a very handsome five-bay mansion of fine Dumfries red sandstone ashlar. It was designed in 1823 by the local architect Walter Newall and is listed, at Category B. Apart from its intrinsic merit, Moat Brae's chief claim to fame is that J.M. Barrie, when a pupil at Dumfries House, played with the sons of the owner in its garden and, as the author later recalled, "became pirates in a sort of odyssey that was long afterwards to become the play of Peter Pan".

After being neglected for years, Moat Brae House was purchased last year by the Loreburn Housing Association, since when the rot and decay have increased. Last May, to local shock and outrage, the chief executive of the housing association, Ahsan Khan, announced that the house was "a goner" and would be demolished, to be replaced by sheltered housing and – such a boon! – a Peter Pan visitors' centre.

This prompted the formation of a building preservation trust, which was given until 31 August to present its proposals. Then, at the beginning of this month, Khan suddenly announced that the house would be demolished in a matter of days, claiming that it was in imminent danger of collapse and a threat to public safety – although many strongly disagree. As listed building consent had been neither sought or granted, demolition would be a criminal act. At the time of writing, the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust has secured an interim interdict to prevent this happening, but the situation remains alarming.

Of course, private developers often behave in this antisocial and potentially criminal manner, but Loreburn Housing Association receives funding from central government and works in partnership with Dumfries & Galloway council. So what has the council been doing while this outrageous situation has been developing? Why, nothing – no attempt has been made to serve a repairs notice on the owners of Moat Brae to protect this precious local asset.

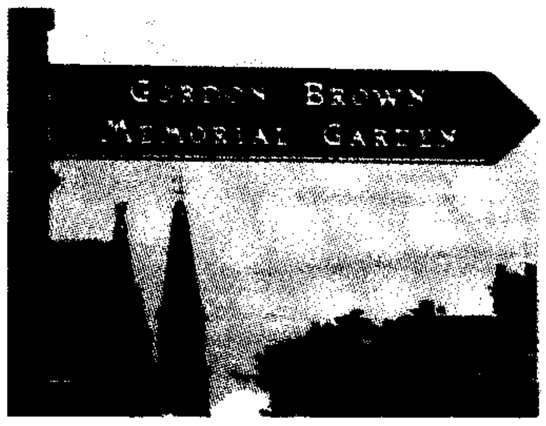
So all strength to the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust (www.moatbrae.org) in its attempt to save this fine historic building from gratuitous destruction and municipal philistinism.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

My God, I hope it wasn't damaged!
WOMAN THROWS MUG AT MONA LISA
"UNHINGED AND WANTED TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HERSELF" - LOUVRE
Those souvenir mugs are really attractive!
I bet that wiped the smile off her face...



I-SPY

Troon, Scotland

Submitted by Mike Souter.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ROYAL Opera House patrons who laid out a staggering £850 to see the visiting Gergiev/ Mariinsky *Ring* Cycle the other week may have been trying to convince themselves ever since that it was money well spent.

The truth, however, is that it was the operatic rip-off of all time: a shabby piece of work thrown together at the last minute, in a cynical way and with disgracefully second-rate results.

We all know by now the seat-of-the-pants style that characterises Valery Gergiev's grandly conceived projects. But what it means is that when you buy a ticket, you're buying into a lottery. And at £850 for a stalls seat, this one was scandalously over-priced.

In fact, the reticence of the advance publicity should have put punters on their guard. The Covent Garden booking brochure said nothing about who was directing or who was singing. Why? Because at the time when that brochure went to print, nobody knew.

At the last minute an absurdly young and no doubt cheap director with nothing like the experience needed for a *Ring* Cycle was shipped in to give the staging a facelift, to the extent that he was able. Hence the laughable non-acting and apologies for sets that looked as though they were made from cardboard and held together with sellotape.

As for the singers, the veteran impresario Lilian Hochhauser gave a revealing interview to her local north London newspaper, the *Ham & High*. In it she admitted that, with just a couple of weeks to go, she had been unable to extract from Gergiev a final cast-list, despite chasing him to and from airports.

The terrible thing about Gergiev is that he's well-connected, a slick operator, and has a habit of getting away with this sort of behaviour. But he shouldn't.

INTERESTINGLY, Covent Garden, along with Britain's other major opera companies, has just done rather well out of the government's emergency fund to see our cultural life through the recession. Of the £4m handed out the other week (and it's always cause for wonder where these suddenly available pots of money come from), some £2.4m went to opera.

However, in Ireland it's a different story. Crisis-hit Ireland is regretting the capital spending sprees of recent years that among other things saw the building of a £33m opera house in the southern depths of Wexford – fine for the few weeks of the Wexford Opera Festival but a potentially disastrous white elephant the rest of the time. Apart from anything else it upset Opera Ireland, the "national" company based in Dublin which saw itself being sidelined.

But now complete disaster looms. The Irish government can't find even the modest amount of cash for opera that it did before. So Opera Ireland, Wexford and a touring outfit called Opera Theatre Company are going to have to merge – all moving down to Wexford and taking shows up to Dublin as and when.

How this will happen is anyone's guess: it's like telling ENO, Covent Garden and Opera North in Leeds that henceforth they're the same thing. So far, the announcement has been met with dumbstruck incredulity and a lot of "no comments" as the three companies go into panic mode.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Faint praise

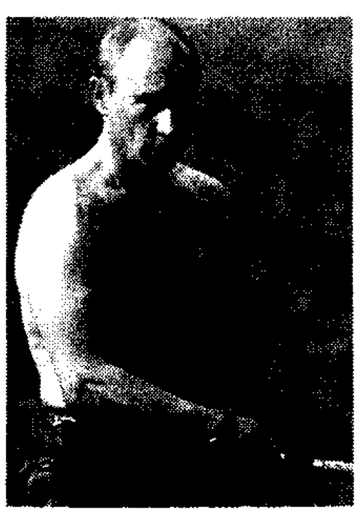
Sir,

Having bought your magazine for over 40 years I have viewed front pages ranging from unfunny, through obvious, smug, knowing, amusing, all the way to downright offensive. For the first time (Eye 1242) you print one that made me burst out loud laughing!

Please, I don't have another 40 years left to wait for another one.

Yours,
MICHAEL PAYNE,
Via email.

Lookalike



Mussolini

Putin

Sir,

I know Vladimir Putin hasn't got a hat and safety specs on, but somehow there's still a strange resemblance to another bygone leader of his people.

JO STATHAM,
Via email.

Hacker's backers

Sir,

In spite of reams of comment about Gary McKinnon in the Daily Mail, the real reason for US insistence on his extradition and the UK Government's reluctance to accede to public pressure to refuse has never been suggested.

It is an absolute fact that a single individual of normal means, especially anyone ill or just curious, cannot penetrate the computer systems of major American defence and security institutions. The combined or even splintered resources of NASA, the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, CIA, National Security Agency and others are not vulnerable to an amateur, however enthusiastic, sitting in their bedroom with a laptop.

The reality is the same in all these situations. A foreign power or agency, and we can speculate as to which that might be in this case, recruits a vulnerable and unwitting stooge to act as a front for their carefully planned and highly resourced penetration. The attacking country or organisation provides their "agent", through innocuous contact, with all the likely means to mount a remote attack. .

When the penetration is discovered, as it inevitably will, the sponsoring organisation melts into the crowd, leaving the hapless individual to face the music. In Gary McKinnon's case, the USA is desperate to interrogate him to discover details of his sponsors. The UK security agencies, fresh from embarrassment about their involvement in the rendition of terror suspects, will not be willing to undertake a sufficiently robust interrogation of McKinnon to satisfy the US authorities.

Yours faithfully,
SQN LDR J.N. BENNETT (RAF Ret'd),
Marple Bridge, Cheshire.

Romp and circumstance

Sir,

Oh come now, Remote Controller, methinks you doth protest too much, a bit like Ruskin and his fear of his wife's "lady garden" (what?).

Sure, Desperate Romantics (EyeTV, 1242) isn't exactly high art, but it's a jolly romp and if it throws in a bit of (dubious) art history for good measure, why not? Don't take it so seriously.

As a TV composer myself, I think Daniel Pemberton's music is really bold and fresh and helps give the series a strong, original identity. Watch a few Carry On clips and you'll hear it's nothing like it.

I didn't notice all the repetition of the introductions (didn't people do that back then?) and at least it's a change from one of those tedious dramas where a middle-aged couple and their grown-up children go away for a weekend to a secluded cottage and not much happens and then there's a bit of a row and some not-very-interesting secret comes out and they all go home.

DRU MASTERS,
Via email.

Sir,

Your excellent disparagement of the BBC's "Desperate Romantics" could have gone further, since it is evident that the programme perpetuated the now-discredited myth that it was his new wife's possession of a bush that led to the non-consummation of Ruskin's marriage. This idea comes from Mary Lutyens' speculations as to what Ruskin might have meant by telling Effie that he was "disgusted with [her] person", in Lutyen's early works on the Ruskin marriage, "Effie in Venice" (1965) and "Millais and the Ruskins" (1967). It was not a contemporary story, and. Lutyens herself changed her mind by 1972's The Ruskins and the Grays, after finding evidence suggesting that Ruskin would have been perfectly aware that women normally had such hair.

Still, mustn't let the truth ruin a good artistic excuse for a full frontal, eh?

STEVE WILSON,
London E6.

Leis and ukuleles

Sir,

I must take issue with your article on the ukulele in Music and Musicians (Eye 1242) where you state that the ukulele "had been all but banned [in Hawaii] for reinforcing racial stereotypes", and have a dig at Jake Shimabukuro for perpetuating "racial stereotypes" himself. I grew up in Hawaii, as did my parents (who still live there), and none of us can recall a period where the ukulele was noticeably absent, let alone "all but banned" from Hawaiian music.

In fact, the ukulele has long been, and still is, a common instrument in the work of many local musicians. Jake Shimabukuro is only one of a multitude of modern Hawaiian artists who rely heavily upon the ukulele, including Keali'i Reichel, the late Israel Kamakawiwo'ole, Sean Na'auao, and many others.

Yours sincerely,
KELLY KANAYAMA,
Via email.

Old comfort

Sir,

What? Someone who runs a care home considering how Alzheimers sufferers think and what worries them and then treating them with kindness and consideration by designing the home to reduce their anxieties? You're right – it is a "Funny Old World".

STAN COLLINS,
Staveley, Cumbria.

Scenes You Seldom See

"Edinburgh. Yeah. Great. But, first, we need to work at being a lot more amateurish"

Vaccine lyrical

Sir,

Although Nick Hewes tries to distance himself from the anti-vaccine lobby (Letters, Eye 1242) he goes on to employ their most common tactic; talking up the bad side effects of vaccines out of context.

During the two-year period in which he claims Gardasil was responsible for 47 deaths in the US 24,000 American women were diagnosed with cervical cancer of whom 8,000 died. Up to April 2009 over 16 million doses of Gardasil had been administered in the US, and over 40 million worldwide, so even if his figures are correct the proportion of adverse reactions is tiny.

It's also important to note that it has yet to be medically proved that Gardasil was directly responsible for any of the deaths reported to be associated with it.

As MD will no doubt be able to confirm every medication has the potential to cause unwanted side effects, of the 700,000 women vaccinated with Cervarix in the UK 1,304 have reported some kind of adverse reaction, in 95% of cases minor symptoms such as a short -lived rash or swelling.

There's no argument that Gardasil is expensive but in every nation that has adopted it so far analysis has proven it to be cost-effective compared to the ever growing cost of treating the conditions it protects against. Canada for example costed vaccination with Gardasil at $300 million but noted it was spending that amount treating cervical cancer alone in 2005.

There are numerous reasons why people oppose vaccines, the real lunatic fringe believe it's part of a conspiracy to reduce the world's population, conservatives in the US, and Judicial Watch describe themselves as such, are convinced it will promote promiscuity.

Yours,
PHIL HIDE
(Who has no connection with the pharmaceutical industry, vaccine manufacturers or any other interested bodies),
Via email.

Sir,

Hoi! Why did you let 'M.D.' spoil the article on herpes (Eye 1242) by getting some basic facts wrong? GlaxoSmithKline only came into existence in this century and was not responsible for the research, development and marketing of acyclovir in the 1970s. Try Wellcome+BurroughsWellcome. Glaxo took over/ merged with them to form GlaxoWellcome and then merged with SmithKline. Please buy 'M.D.' a collection of MIMS for the last 50 years as a Christmas present.

ANDREW BARROW,
Via email.

Pedantry Corner

... I expect the residents of Clacton will be surprised to discover they reside in south Essex (Rotten Boroughs, Eye 1242). Castle Point certainly is, but Tendring, which abuts Suffolk, is about as far north as you can get in this fair county.

SIMON CARTER (CLLR).

... Bookworm (Eye 1242) refers to this year's Booker Prize longlist as "long-winded... adding up to 4,800 pages". In fact this is around the same length as the 2007 longlist (4,770 pages) and shorter than last year's longlist (5,300 pages). I know these figures because I read the longlists in their entirety those years, something I will not be doing with Naughtie's pedestrian selection.

ALAN SIMPSON.

... Sorry, but the performance of the Latin scholars in Eye 1242 cannot pass unstrafed.

*1) **Nemine contradicente** is not a gerundival but it is not an ablative absolute either: it is an (adverbial) ablative of attendant circumstance;*

*2) **Coruscare** means to vibrate, fluctuate or appear intermittently with reference to physical objects, light reflected off them or e.g. lightning; it is different from **scintillare** which does mean to sparkle or glitter. Source: Lewis & Short.*

Tandem, omne est.

R.M. CAMERON.

... You quoted the BBC's coat of arms as bearing the words "Nation shall speak unto nation" (Eye 1242). The last time I walked past this magnificent crest it read: "Nation shall speak peace unto nation".

WENDY COLE.

... Matt Short's missive (Eye 1242) refers to Mark Cavendish and his four stage wins in the Tour de France. He won six stages.

BOB LEE.

Wind-up merchants

Sir,

*Despite his disparaging comments regarding Ioan Richard's confusion of momentum and kinetic energy (Letters, Eye 1242), Fred Riley himself should brush up on his own knowledge of physics. Kinetic energy is not mass times the square of the velocity, it is **one half** of mass times the square of the velocity.*

Dr ROBIN FOSTER,

Wigan.

Sir,

As Fred Riley points out (Eye 1242), a poor understanding of science seems to bedevil many of us in this debate, not least Michael Liebreich with his description of the tide as "intermittent". This isn't the best way to describe something which is more predictable than clockwork, and which is in continuous action.

Michael also seems to vastly underestimate our ability to engineer sea-survivable structures – the production rigs and WW2 forts littering up the North Sea and numerous breakwaters of various ages around the world (Porthcawl for at least 120 years) would suggest otherwise.

The long and the short of the debate is that oil, gas and nuclear are finite energy resources which we are consuming at an enormous rate, whilst tide, wind, wave and any other energy source relying on the sun or the motion of the earth are for all practical purposes infinite. We'd better get the hang of using them pretty quickly or we're all fucked.

Cheers,
SIMON HOGAN,

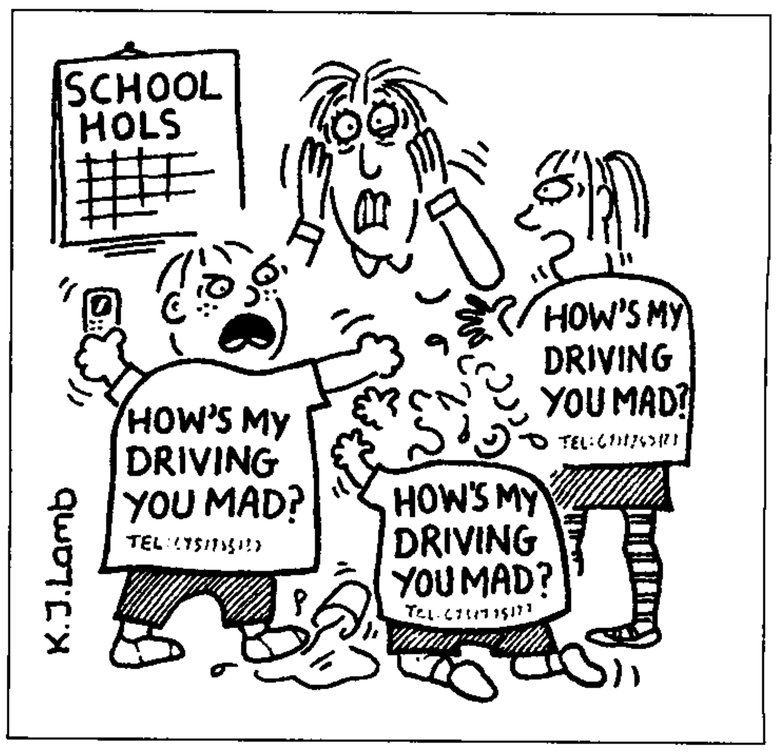
Via email.

Sir,

A cynic, Wilde tells us, knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Michael Liebreich should reflect on this before working himself up into a hissy fit over renewable energy. The price of electricity generated from coal or gas may be lower than that from wind turbines but the true cost must also include the drastic economic impact of global warming detailed in the 2007 IPCC report. The premium required for renewable energy production is negligible compared to the enormous costs of combating rising sea levels, disruption of agriculture, extreme weather events and the expansion of tropical diseases that will result from the continued use of fossil fuel.

Yours,
DAVID BARRATT,

Via email.



Lookalike

Carr

Kaminski

Sir,

There has been much talk about the Tories' unsavoury new allies in the European Parliament. Yet the new chair of the Conservatives and Reformists group, Poland's Michal Kaminski, is actually screechy-voiced comic Alan Carr.

Best wishes,

RICHARD WOODWARD,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He is in fact being released to die – something which should have happened years ago."

RONNIE BIGGS'S SOLICITOR, Radio 4
(Jo Statham)

"We just want to get ready for next week when the whistle really starts."

TONY PULIS, Sky Sports News
(Bob Cook)

"He plucked the ball out of the air like a salmon."

RAY FRENCH, BBC1
(Helen Knight)

"He's not a lad that likes to stand on his feet..."

CHRIS WADDLE, Radio 5 Live
(Allan Ramsay)

"And, finally, Johnson gets umpire Koertzen's finger up..."

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN-JENKINS, TMS
(Peter Scourfield)

Spart the difference

Sir,

In rightly and deftly highlighting the reactionary hypocrisy of pathetic ("Call me... Dave") Prentice's [sic] malign efforts to subdue rank-and-file resistance to the UNISON leadership's despicable funding of neo-monetarist New Labour, a party, since Blair became leader in 1994, as pro-big-business as the Tories, Lib Dems, nationalist and unionist parties, you have made a glaring error: Kelly, Kasab, Muna and Debus are all long-standing and well-respected members of the Socialist Party, formerly Militant/Militant Tendency.

I am a former member of this party, which, despite its Achilles Heel of blind, uncritical support and praise for the fascist, dedicatedly anti-working class (and many other innocents tortured and executed by the notorious anti-socialist Cheka scum) regime of Lenin and Trotsky – the October Revolution was financed by Wall Street! And the Gulags began with Vladimir Ilych's despotic diktats – has always carried through a policy of its excellent union officials and excellent MPs (Nellist, Fields and Wall) of receiving no more than the average wage of a skilled worker in their union or constituency; plus legitimate and vetted expenses. Serwotka and Goodrich (PCS leaders), and Wrack (FBU leader) abide by this principled socialist position – uncle Bob Crow and a few others we are still waiting...

Kind regards,
SIR SCAB OF BLACKLEG HEIGHTS
(aka Michael Paul O'Shea),

Southwark.

Pseudo Names

...The collective humour of Pseudo Names, the way people join in each week with such gusto, is, I think, in the spirit of that great fun loving institution, the British Holiday Camp.

HEIDI HYE.

...My friends have been ordering me to write to Pseudo Names for a long time now and I didn't want to, but here I am even though I haven't got anything to say.

SUE PYNE.

...Surely it is time that Lord Gnome recognised the popularity of Pseudo Names, and set up a dedicated social networking website?

FAY SPOOK,

...With regard to your Pseudo Names, where on earth do you get your material?

POLLY ESTHER COTTON.

...It may comfort Courtney Haddock-Lately (Eye 1242) to know he is not alone in worrying about declining fish stocks.

ADOLF INN.

...We deeply sympathise with Adam Butterfly (Eye 1241). We also bear parental eponymous operatic burdens.

BARBARA SEVILLE
MARY-JO FIGARO.

...Isn't it about time you published that photo again? You know the one we mean...

THEA TRACT
EVE YOUNG
DOLLY BIRD
ANDY MANN
ENA VEST.

...Oh I shouldn't have spent so much time trying to think them up!

TOM PEAR-DEW.

Letter from **Colombo**

from Our Own Correspondent

WHETHER you're up-country in the tea plantations, stepping over the rubble of Jaffna or downtown Colombo, a puffy moustachioed countenance will be gazing serenely through you from every bill poster.

The scarf is a sumptuous scarlet, the traditional *Kurta* Sinhalese tunic is whiter than white and the hair an improbable jet black. No introductions are needed for His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Saviour of our country, All-Conquering Hero of the terrible Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Humiliator of the Mighty Miliband and Lord of 10,000 military checkpoints.

Since his army liquidated the Tamil Tigers and their murderous leader Velupillai Prabhakaran in May to conclude our own grisly 30-year war, Mahinda has been lauded by press toadies as a Churchillian figure facing down your imperialist terrorist appeaser David Miliband, who called for a ceasefire during the Tigers' last stand. In reality, he is the preening figurehead of a ruling junta of three brothers.

In spite of poster boy Mahinda's omnipresence, the title of Big Brother in this fratocracy really belongs to Colonel Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, our sinister defence secretary and former 7/11 storekeeper. He is the mastermind behind the slaughter of the Tigers on the beaches of Mullaitivu, and he clinched the arms deal with China that provided the fighter jets crucial for victory. When not killing terrorists, thin-skinned Gotabhaya threatens journalists, once telling a reporter from our *Daily Mirror* that she would be "exterminated". Inexplicably, 16 journalists have been murdered by persons unknown in the last 20 months and dozens more kidnapped or forced to flee the country.

Today, there are more checkpoints than ever since the fall of the Tigers. The brothers say the soldiers are now needed to deal with organised crime. Gradually, the police have implemented a policy of placing certain undesirables "out of circulation", which involves persuading them to escape and then shooting them. Gotabhaya has failed to punish any officers who have "out-of-circulationed" suspects. Criminal justice is such an expensive bore these days.

Basil Rajapaksa acts as adviser to Mahinda and oversees the brothers' concentration camps for northern Tamils in the notorious Menik Farm complex. Around 282,000 Tamils are held in indescribable conditions and regrettably were unable to participate in the recent provincial elections. Many other Tamils were denied the identification cards they needed to vote, including around 75,000 tea-pickers in Uva province. To nobody's surprise, the brothers and their ironically named People's Freedom Alliance romped to victory.

Our glorious brothers boast every day how the devastated north of the island is open for business – but nothing could be further from the truth. Possession of an international press pass is enough to get you thrown off a bus bound for our most northern town of Jaffna. Of course, this has nothing to do with the road it would have to take through the ruined Vanni area, near the camps and the mass graves of a rumoured 40,000 civilians killed by the army in the last weeks of the war. After all, the brothers have decreed that there were no civilian casualties – a unique achievement in the history of human conflict and testimony to the regime's celebrated compassion.

We will be stuck with the Rajapaksas for some time ahead. A fourth brother, Chamal, is now in parliament – may Buddha preserve us! Another 14 Rajapaksas have senior government jobs. Our opposition is a joke and our free press nonexistent, and yet – despite all that, the camps, the not-so-mysterious disappearances and the disenfranchisement of the Tamils – the IMF has agreed to prop up this regime with a loan of more than $2.6bn.

Our tea estates are renowned for a thread-like black leech which has the decency to drop from its victim once satiated with blood. Alas, the same cannot be said of our own brothers grim.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Chen Fuchao climbed onto the Haizhu bridge, and brought rush-hour traffic to a halt by threatening to commit suicide," the Xinhua news agency reported in Guangzhou City. "He was threatening to jump because he was 2m yuan in debt, and all traffic around the bridge was stopped while police tried to coax him down. After five hours, 66-year-old Lai Jiansheng approached officers and volunteered to talk to Chen, claiming that he had experience in such matters. So the police allowed Lai through, whereupon he greeted Chen with a handshake, then pushed him off the bridge, saying that he was 'angry about the man's selfish activity'."

Despite being detained by police after the incident, Lai was unrepentant about his actions. "I pushed him off because suicide jumpers like Chen are very selfish, and their actions violate the public interest. They do not really dare to kill themselves, they just want to get attention for their appeals from the authorities, and thousands of law-abiding motorists are inconvenienced by their actions. There have been eleven would-be suicide jumpers on this bridge since the beginning of April, and each one caused a traffic jam. Not one of them had jumped, until I gave Chen a push."

Chen survived the twenty-six-foot fall, though with serious damage to his spine and elbow. *(Xinhua News Agency, 23/5/09. Spotter: Denis Collins)*

– ● –

● *"Your story is thorough nonsense," Magistrate Hazel Octive-Hamilton told a defendant in Georgetown Magistrate's Court, Guyana, "and I simply cannot believe it. You are standing there trying to tell me that you don't know who it was who gave you heroin to export. How was it possible for someone to insert condoms full of heroin into your vagina without them revealing their identity? How can you be unable to say who did it? It is thoroughly illogical."*

Earlier, American Timehri Ajar Bourne had pleaded guilty to possessing a kilo of heroin as she attempted to board a flight at Cheddi Jagan International Airport. "Airport staff became suspicious of her during a routine search," the prosecutor explained to the court, "because she was wearing a type of girdle often used to carry drugs. She was detained, and the condoms were discovered in her vagina during a full body search. Bourne admitted possessing the drugs, but said she did not know how they had got there, or who had put them there. She also said she had only come to Guyana to visit a friend, but was unable to name her. All she would tell us was that she had been staying in a hotel, and that she had been followed by 'a lady' everywhere she went."

After the hearing, Bourne was remanded in prison. (Stabroek News, 11/5/09. Spotter: Alan C. C. Gibbs)

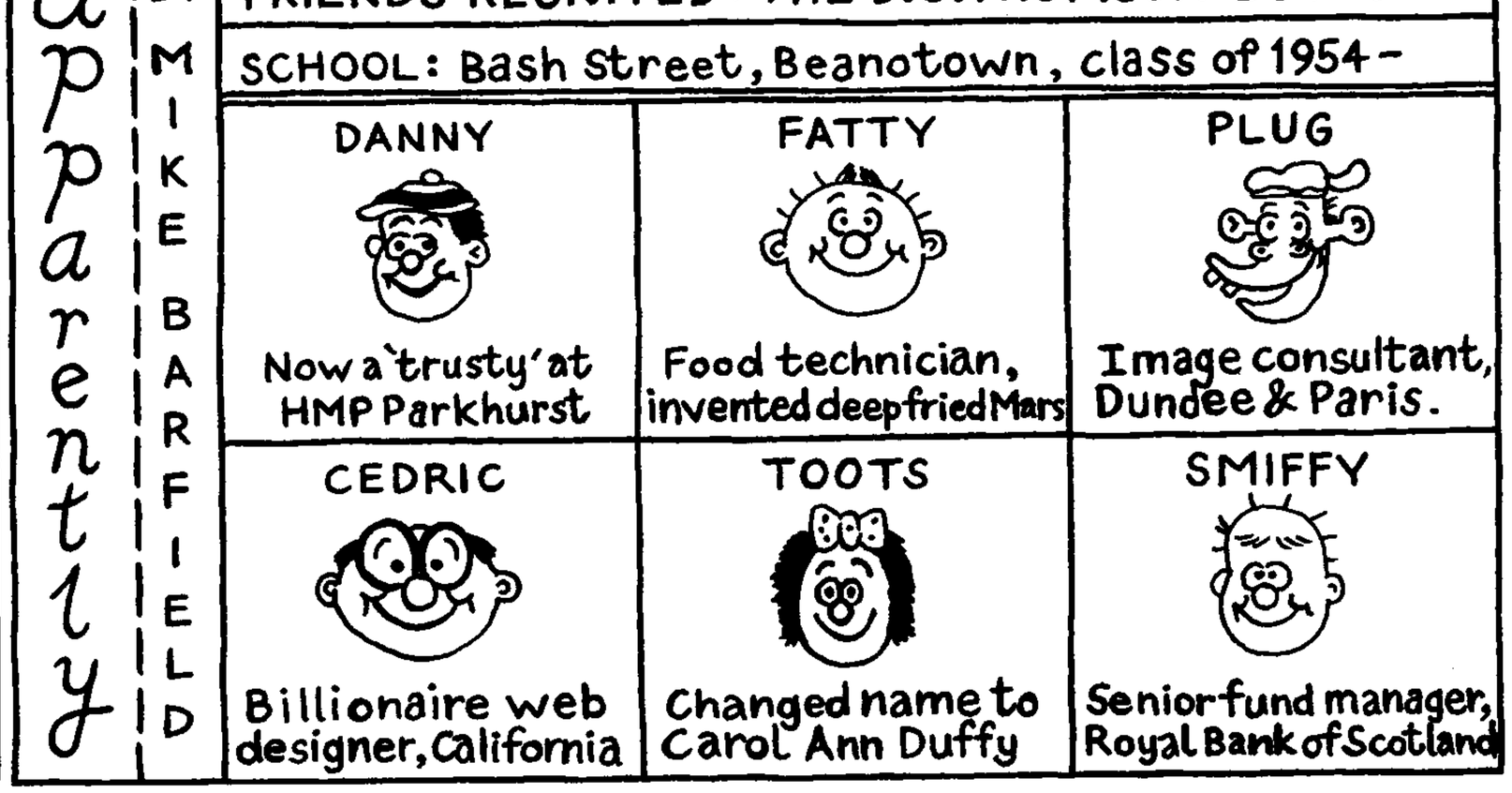
– ● –

● "Piracy along the coastline of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden has reached epidemic proportions," an Austrian financial magazine informed its readers, "making it the most dangerous shipping lane in the world. Kidnapping, theft, and murder are rife, and the authorities are powerless to prevent it. But now a Russian cruise ship is turning the tables by inviting rich Russians to set sail and hunt the pirates.

"The idea is simple. For £3,500 a trip, wealthy customers can sail aboard a cruise ship from Djibouti to Mombasa, travelling at 5 knots and hugging the Somali coast as closely as

possible, as an open invitation to pirates. Once the ship is under attack, the Russians can retaliate with unlimited use of the cruise ship's state-of-the-art arsenal, including AK47 assault rifles, RPGs, and mounted heavy machine guns, and try to sink the pirate ship. Because they are acting in self-defence, they can kill with impunity, and to ensure passenger safety, the rich Russians are guarded by ex-members of Russia's elite special forces."

Russian yachtsman Vladimir Mironov was quoted as saying ,"These passengers are worse than the pirates. At least the pirates have the decency to take hostages. These people are just paying to commit murder." *(Wirtschaftsblatt, 22/6/09. Spotter: Michael Bird)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 51

From the Deck of the Supreme Yacht via the Blackberry of the Supreme Deputy Supreme Leader, Comrade First Secretary of State, Comrade Lord President of The Supreme Soviet, Comrade Admiral of the People's Queen's Navy and Supreme Kindly Pussycat (First Class)

Comrades,

Once again, I hear idle talk among the masses and the jackals of the Rothermereist-Barclayite press that I have somehow usurped the prerogatives and privileges of the Supreme Leader during his patriotic summer sabbatical engaged in community work, cleaning the toilets of an old people's home on the Island of Muck in the Outer Hebrides.

What nonsense this is! We all know that the Supreme Leader is still in supreme charge of everything that goes on in this great country of ours, which he oversees with his customary diligence, wisdom and application, even though his head is down a toilet.

Let me say at once that it was never my intention to give the impression that I was in any way "in charge" of the nation's affairs while the Supreme Leader was enjoying his well-earned breakdown.

My sole purpose was to serve the Supreme Leader in any way I could, by picking up his emails and fielding any calls that might come up in his absence.

I just wanted to help out on the side with a few minor matters, such as the economy, the war in Afghanistan and the unfortunate rise in unemployment due to circumstances beyond our control.

If observers may have concluded from my adroit and skilful handling of all such matters, not to mention my effortless command of the media, that I was supremely qualified to take the supreme job of Supreme Leader, then that is their own affair.

I surely cannot be blamed if I am acclaimed for my political acumen and general charisma, while the Supreme Leader is unfortunately detained by having his head down a toilet.

As well as running the country, I have been fortunate enough to enjoy an exhaustive research trip investigating the effects of the recent banking crisis at first hand.

To ensure that my research was of the highest quality, I arranged to stay on the island of Corfu with some of the world's richest bankers.

No one has a greater amount of money or a more agreeable villa than my good friends Jacob and Nat Rothschild, and they were able to provide me with many invaluable one-to-one lunches and in-depth swimming pools.

Let Comrade Osborne eat his heart out! This year, for very good reasons, this slavering lickspittle from the Cameronian-Goveite claque has been firmly excluded from Comrade Lord Rothschild's excellent summer seminar, following his shameful indiscretions last year when he so disgracefully betrayed the confidences of myself, by pretending that I had quite falsely described the Supreme Leader as an idiot who should go and put his head down a toilet.

How could I, Comrade Mandelson, have ever voiced such an opinion of our beloved and all-capable Supreme Leader?

Such a puerile and transparent fabrication is entirely typical of the degenerate cross-dressing Etonianist-Bullingdonian nest of running dogs who will stop at nothing in their ruthless and insatiable attempts to overthrow the Supreme Leader and to seize the reins of supreme power.

How they could do this to a poor old man with his head stuck down a toilet is beyond belief.

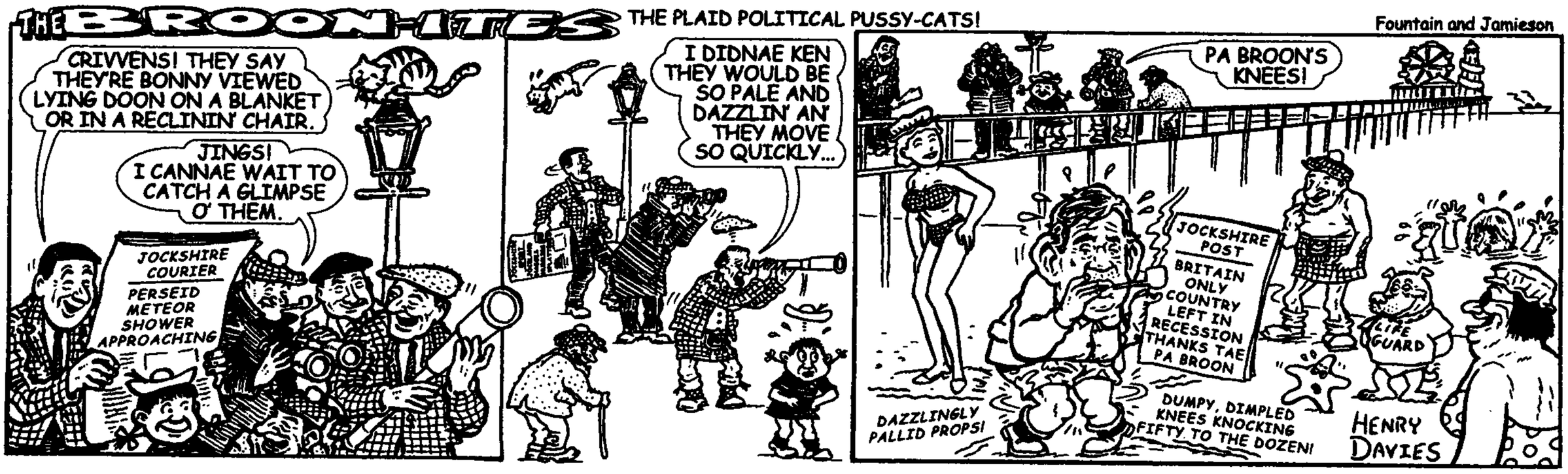
Yours in charge,

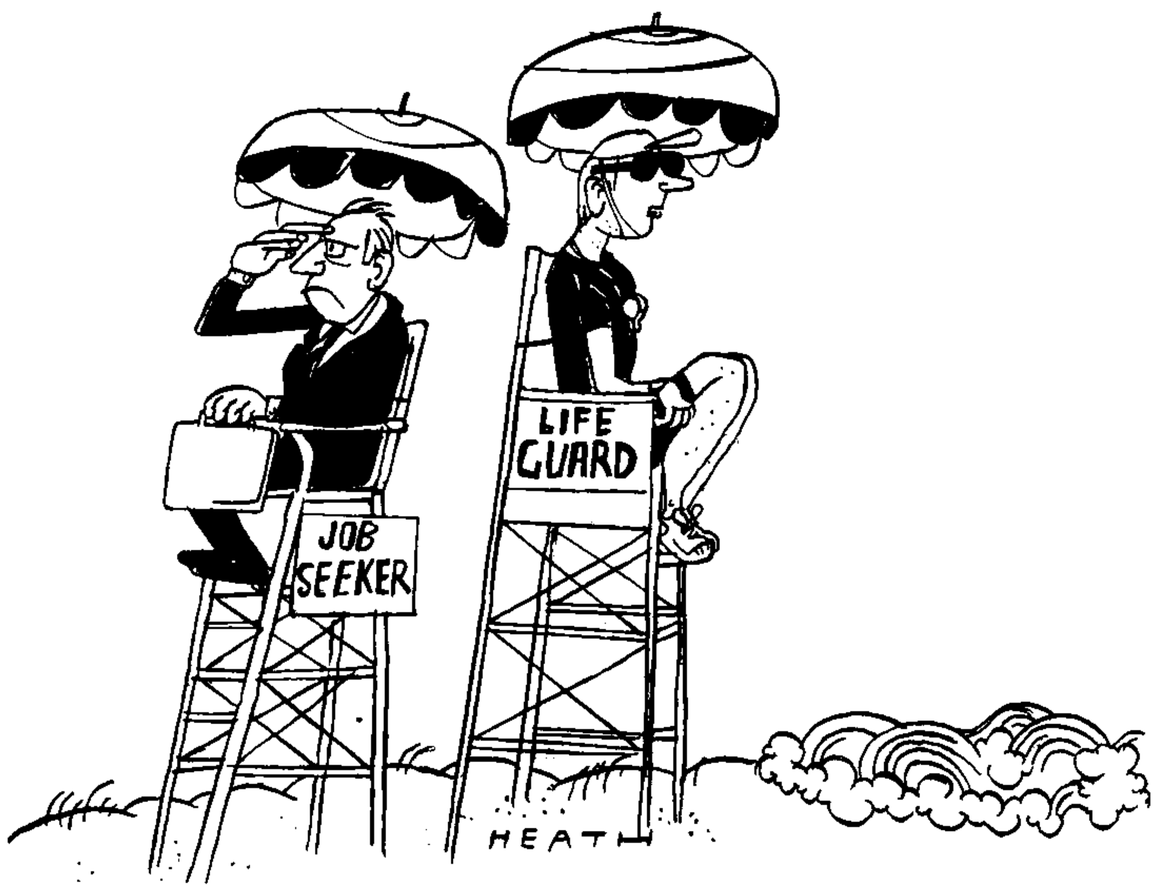
Comrade Lord Mandelson Of Whereveryoulive

The Little Pink Book

"There is no problem with a lack of jobs. I've got about ten of them!"

From the Chapter "Full Employment In A Period of Neo-Recessionary Green Shootism"


THE BROONITES
THE PLAID POLITICAL PUSSY-CATS!
Fountain and Jamieson
CRIVVENS! THEY SAY THEY'RE BONNY VIEWED LYING DOON ON A BLANKET OR IN A RECLININ' CHAIR.
JINGS! I CANNAE WAIT TO CATCH A GLIMPSE O' THEM.
JOCKSHIRE COURIER
PERSEID METEOR SHOWER APPROACHING
I DIDNAE KEN THEY WOULD BE SO PALE AND DAZZLIN' AN' THEY MOVE SO QUICKLY...
PA BROON'S KNEES!
JOCKSHIRE POST
BRITAIN ONLY COUNTRY LEFT IN RECESSION THANKS TAE PA BROON
LIFE GUARD
DAZZLINGLY PALLID PROPS!
DUMPY, DIMPLED KNEES KNOCKING FIFTY TO THE DOZEN!
HENRY DAVIES



DIM MAN TO DIVORCE BIG BREASTED WOMAN

On other pages

● Big-breasted Woman Has Sex With Other Dim Man

● Dim Man Has Sex With Other Big-breasted Woman

(That's enough tabloids. Ed.)

The Daily Chain Mail

Friday 21 August 1346

100 YEARS WAR 'GOING WELL' SAYS GOVERNMENT

by Our Military Expert Professor **Normandy Stone**

THE conflict between England and France is "drawing to a close," said a spokesman for Edward III.

"It's been going for about 8 years now and although that may seem a long time to you, we've got to be committed to the long term, which might mean 100 years."

Asked about how the war would end, he said, "You can take it from me, it won't mean retreating back to England and losing all the territory we've gained".

● *Full story and unfunny tapestry by Robin Mahood* 94

Novelist Bases Novel On Own Experience Shock

by Our Literary Staff
Roman A. Clef

WHO were they – the real-life characters who inspired the greatest novel of all time, *Bargshead Regurgitated* by Evelyn Wargs?

Now, at last, I can reveal that author Evelyn Wargs based the Bargshead family on people he knew.

Amazing

The central character of Lord Sebastian Bargshead is based on the real-life Lord Sebastian Faulks, a contemporary of Wargs at Oxford with whom he had a passionate tutorial *(Is this right? Ed).*

The famous teddy bear in the novel, Aloysius, is based on Lord Sebastian's bear Alopecia (known as "Thread Bear" to the young wags at Highchurch College).

I can also reveal that, when he visited the ancestral home of the Bargsheads, the young Wargs was bowled over by the heady atmosphere of snobbery, homosexuality and leopard-skin accessories *(Shome mishtake shurely?)*

The Hon. Willoughby Fruity-Bumstead, who died of liver failure in a seminary in Positano, aged 24

Incredible

Years later, Wargs, unlike any other novelist before, was to turn this highly personal experience into a novel and then the most famous TV series of all time, which *(That's enough. Ed).*

New Books

Lord of the Flies Undone by William Golding

Savage tale of an adolescent author who descends into depravity when let loose on a deserted girlfriend.

Nothing much happens, but in a shocking denouement, they meet years later and have sex in a field.

■ **Eye Rating** *Desperate summer attempt to interest readers in literary biography.*

Max Hastings by Winston Churchill

A bully, a braggart, an overgrown schoolboy. But was he also our greatest ever Englishman? No.

■ **Eye Rating** *Not another book about Hitler...*

Summer Movies

Shred II

He's back! The return of the unloveable ogre who fled to France with his pot of gold after his accounts were revealed to be fairy tales.

Now Shred is back with a whole new adventure.

First, Fred needs a job, but he has to convince everyone that he isn't just a scary monster who makes everyone run to the banks and take out their money as soon as he appears!

Can Shred turn into Prince Charming and start a new life?

★ **Eye Rating: £££££.**

Voice of Shred ..... **Gordon Brown**
Voice of Donkey ..... **Alistair Darling**
Voice of Fairy Godmother ..... **Harriet Harman**
Voice of Reason ..... **Vince Cable**

Advertisement

Book now for the cruise of a lifetime

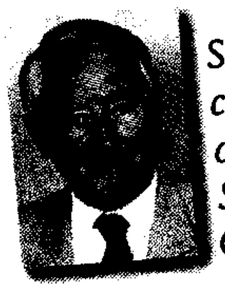
The Gnomonia's "In The Footsteps of the Vikings" visits the following destinations:

- Newcastle
- Rockall
- Ullapool
- Reykjavik
- Aberdeen
- Lund

and many other 'Ports of Paradise' in the frozen north!

With internationally acclaimed star lecturer **Lord Steel of Auchtermuchty** (formerly Sir David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party).

As you sail across the Celtic fjords, sit back and listen to Lord Steel's fascinating life told as only he can tell it. From the ground-breaking Abortion Bill of 1967 through to the historic merger of the Liberal Party with the SDP in 1988, to his lifelong passion for vintage cars, the peerless peer delights and enthralls his captive audience.



Says Lord David, *"All my life I have loved old crocks, even when the wheels fall off, they run out of steam and they end up giving speeches in the Sutton Hoo Lounge of the SS Gnomonia!"*

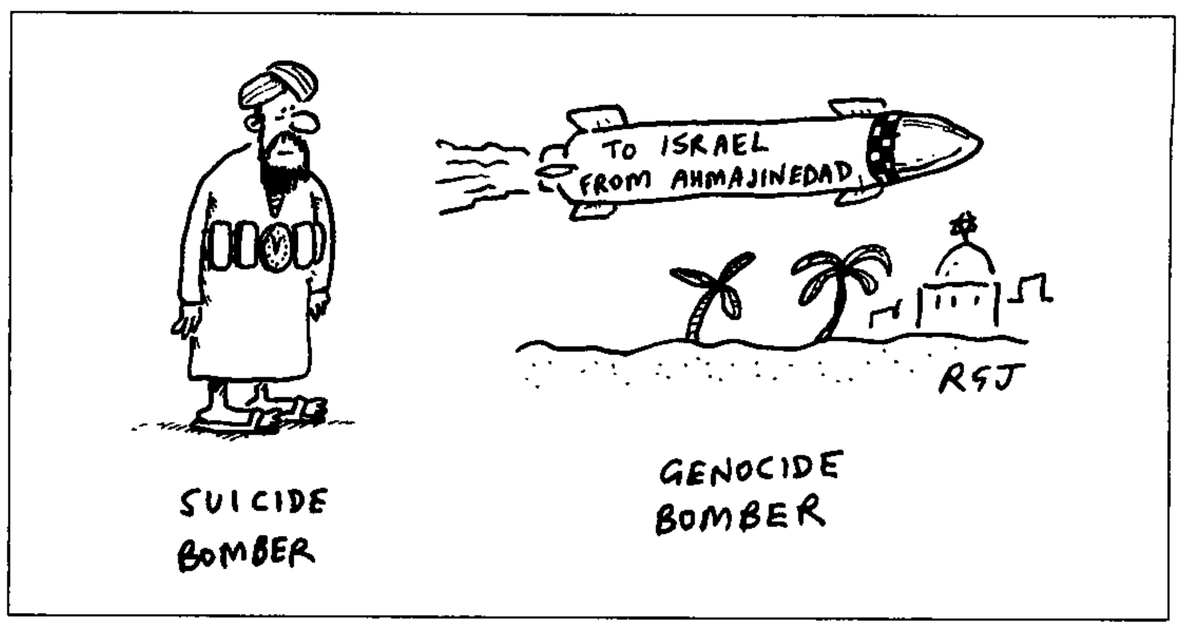
Says former Liberal Leader Lord Thorpe: "There is nothing like a good cruise!"

Don't be disappointed and book now for a tour of a lifetime.

All A-bore! Go back to your cabins and prepare for sleep!

My reputation's at risk, says Berlusconi prostitute

The Times



POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Les Paul, Inventor of the Electric Guitar

So. Farewell
Then Les Paul.

Yes, you invented
The Electric
Guitar.

Although Keith says
A lot of pedants
Will probably
Write in to
Say you
Didn't.

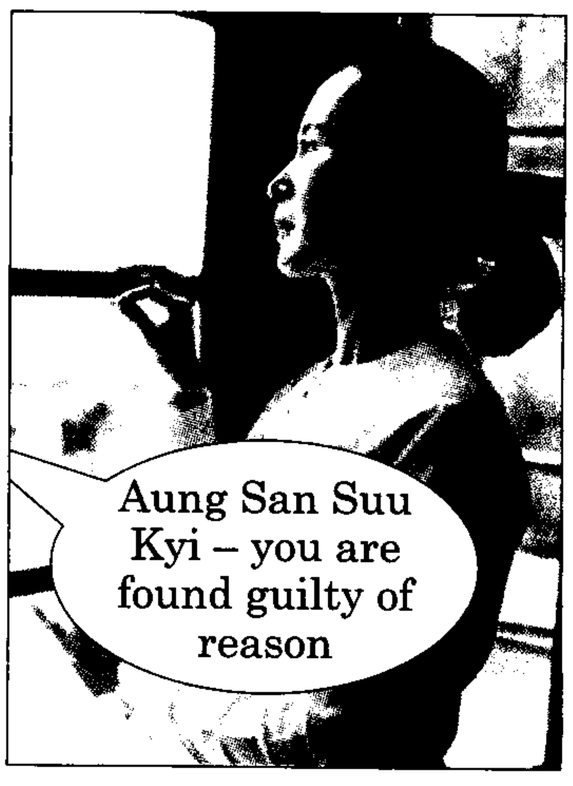
But you also
Sang with your
Wife, Mary.

"How High The Moon"
Was your big
Hit.

Well, now
You know
The answer.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

BURMA VERDICT – HOUSE ARREST EXTENDED



INTRODUCING THE NEW BURQINI

Modest Female Swimwear, Approved For Use In UK Swimming Pools

A Taxi Driver writes

EVERY week a well-known cabbie is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance. This week Normo Tebbs (cab no. 4372856) on the future of the Conservative Party.

What d'you reckon to that Cameron, guv? If you ask me, he's useless! I mean, with the old Tories you knew where you stood – Enoch, Maggie... you wouldn't catch *her* going on holiday wearing shorts and a polo shirt, no, nowadays you'd be better off voting for the UKIP lot. Very clever men – Europe, immigration, immigration, Europe, immigration, immigration... No, them UKIP they talk a lot of sense. That David Cameron, though, he's rubbish!

Oi! There's that bloody Boris on a bike! They shouldn't be allowed in the bus lanes, should they? Let's run him over! Ha! Ha! Ha! I 'ad that Kilroy Silk in the back of the cab once. A *real* gentleman...

Normo Tebbs's new book *How To Cook Cameron's Goose* is published by Snipcook & Feed, £19.99.

BUSINESS EMPIRE FACES COLLAPSE

Boss 'Wasted Millions'

by Our Media Staff **Crunchtime O'Booze**

HUNDREDS of worried employees of one of Britain's most respected financial institutions last night besieged the headquarters of the *Guardian*, threatened with closure after *running* up what were described as "horrifying losses".

The staff were quick to point the finger of blame at the *Guardian*'s flamboyant boss, known as "Fred The Rubbisher".

In recent years, "The Rubbisher" has taken the *Guardian* out of its traditional role of providing Britain's most reliably boring newspaper into a series of high-risk ventures.

Northern Rock Bottom

Billions of pounds were invested in crazily ambitious projects, such as setting up offices across America, investing in giant Berliner presses and hiring thousands of aspiring journalists to run the world's biggest online newspaper website.

Rubbisher dreamed of a worldwide digital empire, available at the click of a mouse to anyone from Wall Street tycoons to Tibetan herdsmen.

Who Will Graud The Graudian?

There were voices on the board who warned "Fred The Rubbisher" that he was "moving too far, too fast".

But he would have none of it. "This is a new age," he liked to say, "and there are new roles for those who dare to break the mould."

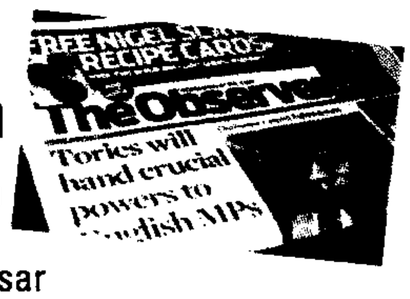
But today a chill wind blows through the deserted Farringdon Road HQ of the once-mighty *Guardian* empire.

And where is Fred The Rubbisher, the architect of this catastrophe?

A spokesman would say only, "We think he is in the South of France playing the piano."

Advertisement

Save this historic newspaper for the nation



For centuries the Observer has been chronicling the unfolding drama of our island story – from the landing of Julius Caesar on these shores in 55 BC to the recent tragic split of Ms Katie Price and Mr Peter Andre.

Some of the greatest names in British journalism have graced its pages, from George Orwell and Malcolm Muggeridge to Lynn Barber.

But today this once-great newspaper is in sad decline. Years of neglect have taken their toll and its once-great columns have crumbled to dust.

This is why we need your help to preserve this legendary institution for a few more weeks.

Send your donation now to SOB (Save the Observer), in association with English Heritage and the National Trust.

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0847 hrs Armed Response Unit deployed to the St Hazel of Blears Primary School in Poundonly Road, after notification that a Mrs Kirsty Steggles had been causing an affray by complaining to staff that her son Simon had been subjected to alleged bullying by a group of knife-wielding nine-year-olds from nearby Daley Thompson Estate. After assessing the situation, Superintendent Stanmore ordered the tasering of Mrs Steggles at a 50,000-volt level, and she was then taken to the station to be charged with 57 offences under the Wasting Of Police Time Act 2007.

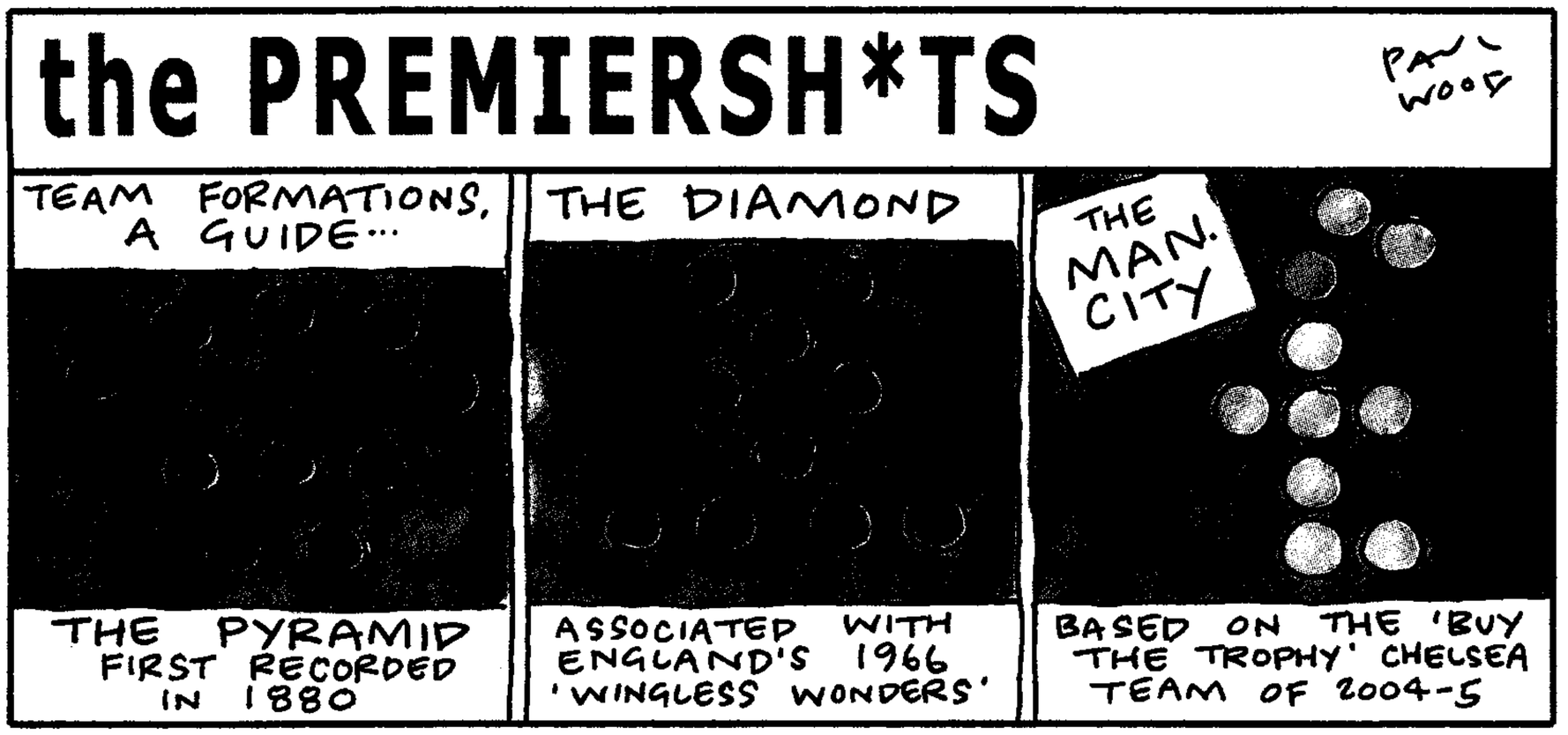
A number of nine-year-olds were offered counselling after suffering the trauma of being falsely accused of bullying.

Social Services took "Child S" (Simon) into care, having assessed his mother as unsuitable to be a parent owing to her obsessive fixation with her son being bullied merely because he came home with occasional multiple stab wounds.

1143 hrs All officers assemble for a Summer Post-Solstitial Ritual Observance since Paganism has now been officially recognised by the Home Office as a bona fide religion, along with Scientology, Moonie-ism, Jedi Warriorism, and C of E.

The High Priestess (WPC Sandra Morden) called on "Beelzebub" to bless the work of the force. A squirrel (grey) was then made the subject of a living sacrifice, after consultation with Health & Safety, in order to ensure good weather for the forthcoming Feast of the Corn Circle, lasting for the duration of the month of August, which will be observed by all Pagan members of the force (everybody) under the orders of the Station Grand Warlock (PC Uxbridge). The station will accordingly be closed until 5 September.

Any members of the public wishing to report a serious crime (e.g. rape, murder, filling the wrong wheelie-bin) are advised to ring Neasden 24/7 Security, a private firm which we can highly recommend as it is run by a number of ex-officers from the Neasden station who have retired early for reasons of ill-health.


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
TEAM FORMATIONS, A GUIDE...
THE PYRAMID FIRST RECORDED IN 1880
THE DIAMOND
ASSOCIATED WITH ENGLAND'S 1966 'WINGLESS WONDERS'
THE MAN. CITY
BASED ON THE 'BUY THE TROPHY' CHELSEA TEAM OF 2004-5

5TH ENGLAND TEST: SHOCK ENGLAND CALL UP

£40 BILLION HEIST IS BIGGEST IN HISTORY

by Our Crime Staff **Ronnie Biggestheistinhistory**

A GROUP of smartly-dressed men walked brazenly into the headquarters of most of Britain's leading banks and stole billions of pounds from under the noses of the financial regulators.

A spokesman for the police, Inspector "Knacker of the Fraud Squad" Knacker, said, "We are not investigating this blatant crime, though we have issued guidelines asking these well-dressed bankers not to steal so much money next time, as it didn't look too good for the industry."

Reuters, Aug. 2009.

MUCH LOVED CARTOON CHARACTER TO BE 'TONED DOWN'

by Our Comic Strip Staff **PC Thomson**

ONE OF Britain's best-loved comic book characters Boris the Johnson is to be given a PC makeover following complaints that he sends the 'wrong signals' to today's youth.

Generations of Britons have revelled in Boris's anarchic sense of mischief and ability to get into scrapes.

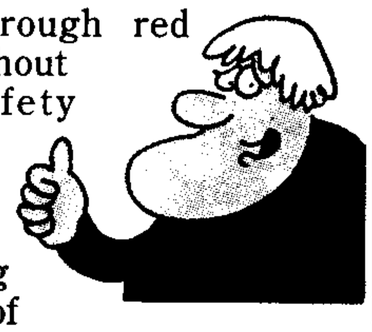
With his tousled hair and love of long Latin words, Boris has delighted children of all ages by defying convention with his irreverent antics.

Desperate Dave

But now kill-joy Tory bosses have insisted that Boris clean up his act and present a new caring, compassionate, responsible image more in tune with the new Conservative values of the 21st century.

Out go:

- jokes about watermelons and picaninnies.
- riding through red lights without a safety helmet.



- poking fun at the 'whingeing scousers' of Liverpool.
- threatening to beat up 'softy journalists' with his best friend Guppy the Crook.
- putting 'Petsy up the duff' and then denying it as a 'pyramid of piffle'.

From now on Boris will be shown with his hair sensibly combed, celebrating London's 'ethnic mix', attending 'Gay Pride' rallies, cycling responsibly in designated cycle lanes and promoting the Olympics as a wonderful opportunity to boost the East London economy. *(That's enough Boring Boris, Ed.)*

BBC Radio 3

Opera Highlights

The Damnation Of Silvio

by Hector Berliozsconi

AS the curtain rises, we see the Robber Baron Silvio hosting a lavish banquet at the Palazzo Copulazzione. He is surrounded by a chorus of beautiful young women, many of whom are members of the European Parliament. They are singing the famous Rumpipumpi Chorus from the popular operetta *Orgy And Bess.*

But their merrymaking is interrupted by the arrival of the Baron's stern but beautiful daughter, Barbara. She rebukes him in the moving aria *Che bastardo lei* ("O Father, you are guilty of inappropriate behaviour").

The Baron is unmoved and dismisses her, saying "Mamma mia" ("You're worse than your mother").

But, as the festivities recommence, there is a clap of thunder and we see His Holiness the Pope arriving in his Popemobile, flanked by a chorus of Cardinals on motorbikes wearing red helmets and dark glasses. He addresses the Baron in his native German, singing the fearsome *Schweinhund* aria, beginning with the curse "Gotterdammerung" ("God damn you, you lascivious lecher, you will go to hell").

Just as we expect Silvio to be dragged down to the underworld by demons, a chorus of Italian voters enters and carries him shoulder-high to his favourite brothel.

The Pope sadly withdraws, and they sing triumphantly "Papa gono" ("His Holiness has left the building").

(CURTAIN)

Holiday Range

The 'HULLO SAILOR' collection from Corfu.

The latest in nautical chic!

Peter is wearing a natty Rothschild jacket, Brown slacks (while Peter runs the show!) held up by a black leather belt-up-everybody-else.

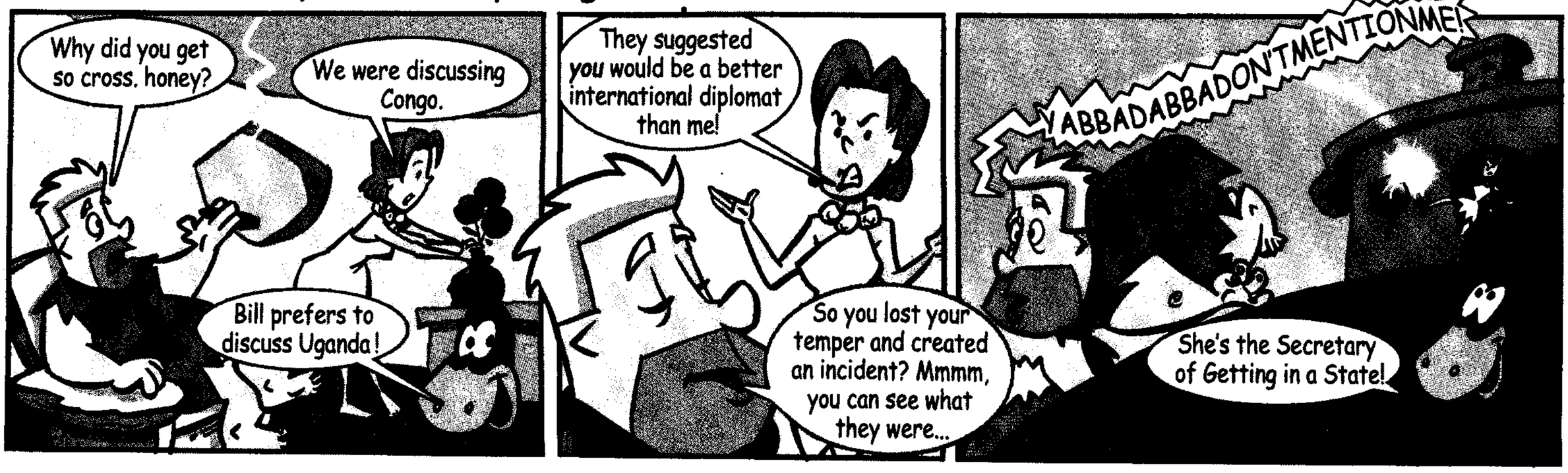
A 'shirty shirt' complements the outfit, designed for the man who's in charge (but looks relaxed). A pair of blue loafers (a reference to Cameron and little Osborne!) completes the look.

Gnomewear

It's jolly Boden Weather!

MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY

Yes! They are back yet again!


Why did you get so cross, honey?
We were discussing Congo.
Bill prefers to discuss Uganda!
They suggested you would be a better international diplomat than me!
So you lost your temper and created an incident? Mmmm, you can see what they were...
YABBADABBADON'TMENTIONME!
She's the Secretary of Getting in a State!

"Fancy meeting up for a chat? OK, log on and I'll see you in there..."

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Baby P parents named

i name and sham-ed them long a-go SCUM A AND SCUM B – ***Broken_Britan***

normal peple like us can only imagine the thing's these pervert's think – ***Eye_4_an_eye***

I look at Baby Peter with his beautiful blond hair and blue eyes and wonder how Stephen Barker could perpetrate such monstrous acts. Then I read that he is a "Nazi" and the penny (or shekel?) drops. No self-respecting Aryan would harm his own race in this way – it's another cosmopolitan media conspiracy to discredit those who expose the Old Gang and their international backers. – ***Odal***

spot on odle the muslim's must be laufing there turben's *off* when they see us killin are own flesh an blood – ***England_till_i_die***

We would all like to do what these selfish layabouts did. But we don't, because we are civilised members of society. – ***Brown_out***

Has anyone noticed that the gay policemen and their surrogate "son" are keeping very quiet about all this? – ***Metric_Martyr***

dogooder's in ivy tower's spend milion's to protect the scum with new identity's ● lets put them in a special cell with move-ing wall's and make it 27 centimetre's small-er evry year until there bone's breake like the tiny little bone's of poor baby peter ☹ – ***Red_White_and_True***

Tie three nooses in one rope and hang them all at once to save money. – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

Set up a comitee with ester sir alan and one of sir bobby robsons son's ⚽ they will sort it – ***Wee_Billy_Dunn***

I was careful to reassure my young daughters that Stephen Barker will not be released until they are too old to be killed by him. Imagine my horror when I found them screaming at Andrew Flintoff on the television. He looks just like Barker, and they have had nightmares ever since. Perhaps it's for the best that he is retiring soon. – ***Emily***

tippycle baby p celebrity ban-dragon hog-ing the headline's as soon as theres news about maddie ● scum – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

SUMMER READING IN THE EYE

Our panel of celebrity critics reveal what they'll be packing for the beach...

2009

A.S. Byatt *Novelist*

The narratives of sport are at once deep, contested and penumbral. The tremulousness of the possessive pronoun in *Gazza: My Story*, expressing Gascoigne's almost elemental fear that the tale before us is, in fact, someone else's, has a terrible, brooding poignancy. With cricket these anxieties are perhaps more occluded. Yet much lies on the surface: Ponting's gnomic raptness; Pietersen's insouciant *élan*; Flintoff's Herculean splendour. Seeking to unlock these dense mythologisings of nationhood and symbol, I took refuge in Marcus Berkmann's *Ashes to Ashes* – the funerary preoccupations of its title entirely apposite – wherein lie, I discovered, some very real intimations of trauma. As for my sister's book about jigsaw puzzles, I should just like to state once and for all that mother left the tea service to me, and that the family copy of *Little Women* which the vicar gave us is inscribed 'To Antonia', not 'To Margaret', and it is *no use* her pretending otherwise...[*continues*]

Andrew Motion *Former Poet Laureate*

Each morn the bent-backed postman brings
His book-filled parcels tied with string
Those from the *Guardian* I review
As for the rest – what can a chap do?
[*Will this do? A.M.*]

Jeanette Winterson *Novelist*

Sheer truthfulness compels me to say that Stultitia Hominy's *Winterson: Sapphism's Immortal Mage* (University of New Dworkin Press, $199) is a rewarding take on a wholly engrossing subject. If I have a criticism of this project it's that *Lighthousekeeping* should surely be described as a "very considerable" achievement rather than just a "considerable" one. But this is a quibble.

D.J. Taylor *Novelist and critic*

Ignored yet again by the metropolitan backscratchers of the Booker panel, Silas Clenchwarton's Cumbrian dialect-epic *Reet then Marrer?* (Samphire Press, £6.99), featuring a Westmoreland sheep-farmer's attempts to round up his flock before he dies of alcoholism, looks set to rival Ken Geordie's *Didst Tha Niver See Jackie Milburn Score, Bonny Lad?* as a masterpiece of 21st-century English regionalism. Sebastian Faulks is always good at inventing interesting characters, so I'll be looking out for his new one too.

Andrew Roberts *Historian*

It has taken nearly half a century, but at last revisionist scholars have set to work to unpick the tangle of lies and deceit that has so disfigured British Imperial history. I was particularly impressed by *Dyer: Amritsar's Forgotten Hero* (Rant & Bigot, £25), in which the Hon. Peregrine Looney proves beyond doubt that the boiling in oil of several hundred defenceless natives was by far the most humane of the limited number of measures then available to save the empire from ruin. Bakkies van der Kaffirbasher's *Sing If You Hate Mandela* (Springbok Press, 200R) may be thought strong meat by some, but its analysis of the deficiencies of the modern South African state contains much for the forward-thinking Conservative to ponder.

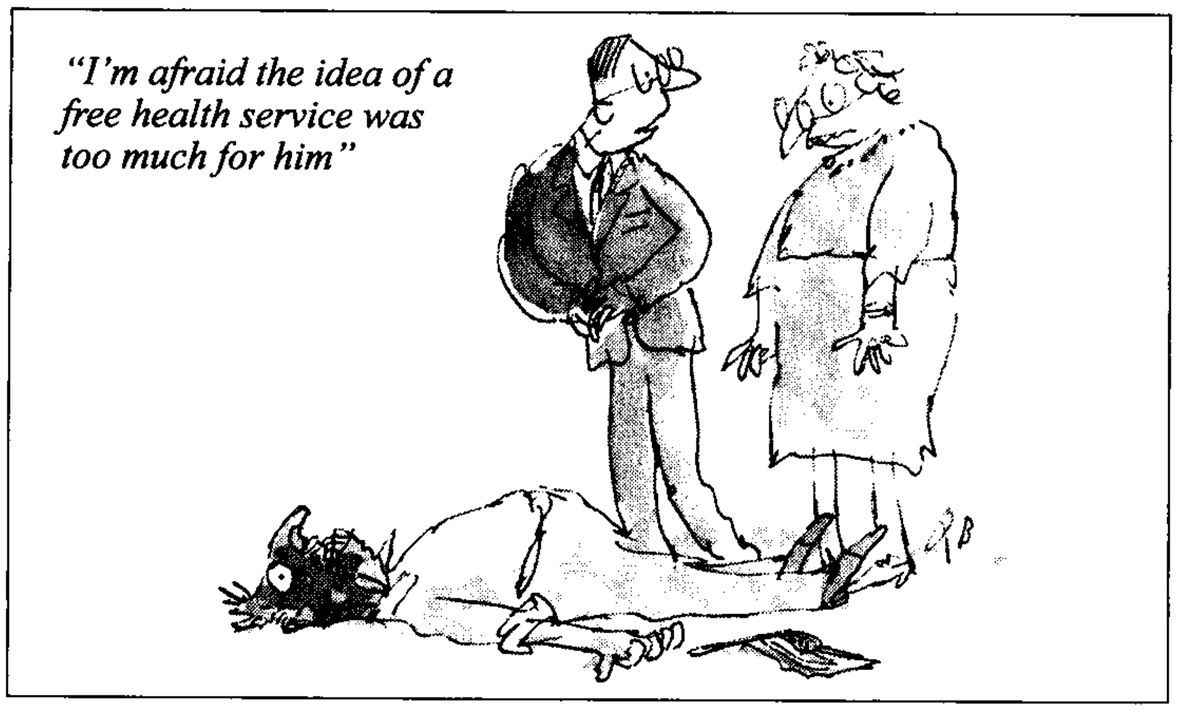
Mariella Frostrup *Critic and broadcaster*

Ageism affects the world of books no less insidiously than broadcasting. Just as most of my waking hours are spent in defending the meagre foothold I have somehow managed to acquire on Radio 4, Sky TV, etc etc etc, so other talented women of my generation are routinely ignored by a cultural elite interested only in youth, glamour and glibness. In particular, the almost complete silence that greeted A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book* (Chatto) and Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (Fourth Estate) was a shocking indictment of the literary establishment's contempt for those of us beyond our first youth.

Julian Fellowes *Novelist and thespian*

Eheu fugaces! What, I ask you, is a gentleman to read in these vexed and demotic times, where every upstart penny-a-liner jostles for the recognition that a seemlier age would deny them? I had high hopes of Miss Paula Byrne's *Mad World* (HarperCollins), a neatly written, if not sagacious, study of the origins of *Brideshead Revisited*. Imagine my horror, then, at the revelation that Evelyn Waugh, that "role model" (a vulgar phrase, I grant you, but no other suits) for every aristocratic scrivener worth the name was *a publisher's son from Hampstead* – that is, a tradesman – and, having attended a very minor public school (Radley would have done at a pinch, Lancing College, I contend to be quite beyond the pale), was really not one of us at all. I was forced, consequently, to take refuge in the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire's remarkable compendium *Home to Roost* (John Murray). A pedant might cavil at her prose style and a highbrow jib at her subject matter, but by heaven, she is at any rate a lady, of respectable family, and lives in a civilised house, to which, if one is being frank, one would very much like an invitation... [*continues*]

"I think we need to get some new stock for this section"



TORIES AND NHS — 'PRIVATE IS BEST'

by Our Political Staff **A. and E. Houseman**

DAVID CAMERON today slapped down the debate in his party over the merits of the NHS and told all MPs to "Keep it private!".

Nil by Mouth

The Tory leader made it clear that he believes that everyone should keep their views about the NHS "very private indeed".

He said, "It's my insurance policy and I am committed to it. Public views are very unhealthy and do not work for us. The private system, where everyone shuts up, is much more efficient in keeping me fit for government".

PALIN ATTACKS NHS

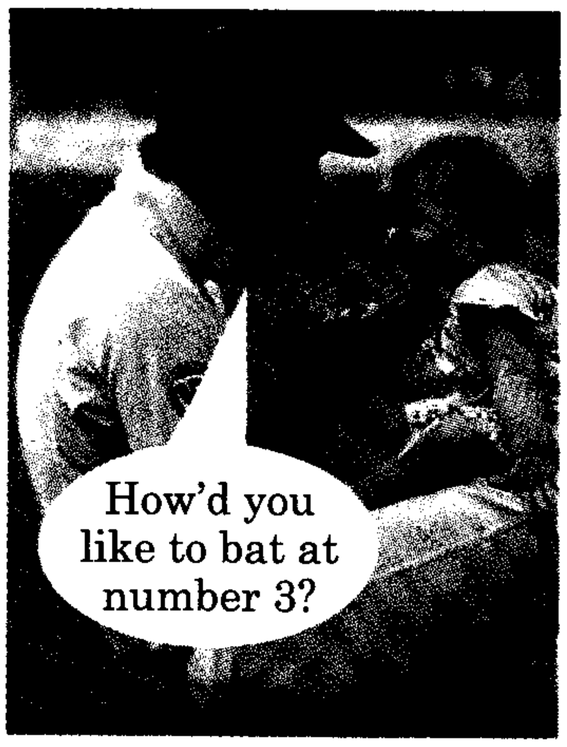
by Our US Staff
Lou P. Lew

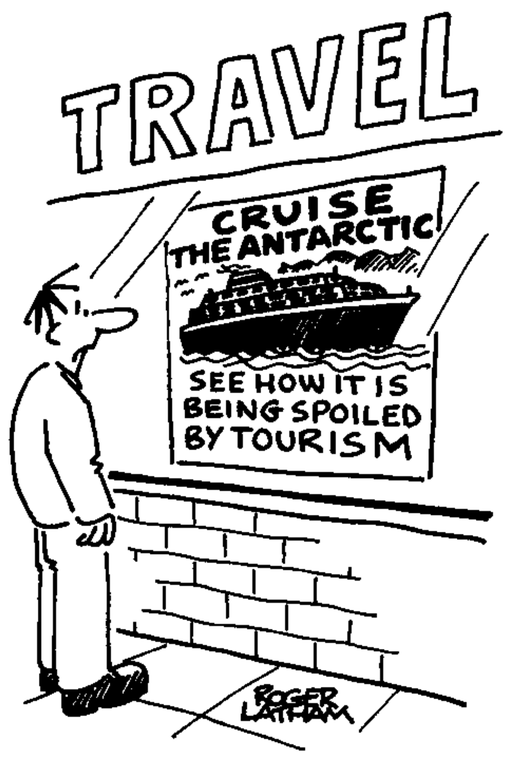
FORMER Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin has launched a stinging attack on Britain's NHS, saying that Hugh Laurie's medical genius was never recognised before his move to America.

"All the time Hugh was working in England, did the NHS ever once ask him to diagnose a patient with a mysterious life-threatening illness?" Palin told a crowd of cheering gun-toting Republican Senators. "Yet here in America Hugh is saving lives week in, week out with his maverick but brilliant diagnoses on House.

"Only America's private health care could see what a brilliant surgeon Hugh Laurie was. God bless America!" said Palin, foaming at the mouth before being taken away by men in white coats.

PONTING DENIES 'OVER-CONFIDENCE' COMING INTO LAST TEST





The Daily Terrorgraph

Can Miliband ever be justified?

OBVIOUSLY to all right thinking people the idea of Miliband is completely unacceptable.

However there are certain circumstances when we have to concede that the use of Miliband might be justifiable.

When the British Foreign Secretary condones terrorism then, and *only* then, is there a case for Miliband *(cont. p94)*

Advertisement

~~£~~~~£~~~~£~~~~£~~ *Charity Appeal* ~~£~~~~£~~~~£~~~~£~~

ALAN, seen above, has suffered for years from Touries Syndrome, which leads him to swear uncontrollably and to complain that he is being persecuted. So bad has this affliction recently become that poor Alan is now in danger of losing his job. When he was secretly filmed in the House of Commons using a well-known expletive, this appeared on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*. Alan, a multi-millionaire, then rambled on incoherently about having to live on 'rations' and claimed that the whole world apart from himself had "gone mad".

Researchers claim that Alan's case is a particularly acute example of an affliction which has lately struck down many MPs, as they face up to the harsh reality of having to live without fiddling their expenses.

Please send money now.

- £2,000 will provide Alan with the services of a part-time gardener.
- £10,000 will provide him with an agreeable lunch at the Manoir de Quatre Matelots.
- £1,000,000 will buy Alan a life-peerage under the Cameron Government.

Send you contribution now to the Touries Syndrome Society, The Old Fuckhouse *(surely Duckhouse? Ed.)*, Shittingbourne, Kent.

Those stringent new FSA rules on bank bonuses in full

- Bonuses should not be paid to reward short term performance
- Er... unless you decide they should be....
- In which case we'd probably just look the other way...
- So, as you were...
- Er...
- That's it.

DIARY

OBAMA ON THE BEACH

I stand before this ice-cream truck today humbled by the task before me, grateful for the trust my wife and my daughters have bestowed upon me, mindful of the great and inspiring choice of popsicles and ice-creams and other light refreshments both borne and consumed by our ancestors before us.

We should rejoice in this choice and this variety.

It is the differences between iced comestibles that make them so attractive.

So let us celebrate these differences.

"Daddy," says Malia Ann. "May I please have a Tutti Frutti?"

I look at her through these eyes, the eyes of a father both loving and dutiful.

"I say to you this, Malia Ann," I say. "And this I say to you. The Tutti Frutti is a fine ice cream. Of that there is no doubt.

"But let us go further than that. Yes, the Tutti Frutti has all the truly outstanding qualities of a great ice cream.

"It is cold.

"It is colorful.

"And it is good to the taste.

"It remains firm upon its stick, and is able within its noble resilience to endure the harsh heat of sunlight.

"But I tell you this, Malia Ann. Once an ice cream is eaten, it is eaten.

"And that ice cream remains eaten.

"For all its worth, that ice cream once swallowed does not have it within its power to reappear on that stick.

"That is our one true sorrow.

"But it avails us nothing to pretend that it is any other way. So now, Malia Ann, is the time for realism.

"Now is the time for tough choices – choices that it is in the heart of each one of us to address.

"Now, Malia Ann, is the time to confront the popsicle."

Malia Ann is moved. I can tell by the way she bows her head.

That we are in the middle of our popsicle purchase is by her now well unerstood.

We have an obligation to our children, I tell her, to buy them a popsicle. But let us not forget this too.

We have an obligation to the gentleman selling that popsicle to conduct ourselves with dignity, and with haste.

This is the wisdom that I pass on to little Malia Ann.

"Yessir, what can I get you?" says the gentleman in the ice-cream truck.

"First, let me express my thanks to you, sir, for being here, and for travelling so far, and so loyally, to be with us today. It is that promise, that faith in the belief that, one day, we shall indeed reach that land towards which we first embarked, that has kept the hopes of this nation alive since –"

"Next!" says the gentleman in the ice-cream truck. And then he addresses me in this way. "Sir, if you can't make up your mind, I'm gonna have to ask you to move on. Others are waiting!"

I step aside and turn to Malia Ann. "This is a defining moment, Malia Ann," I say.

"A moment when it pays us to heed the will of those who follow us.

"To stand in line avails us nothing, Malia Ann, if by so doing we fail to match their courage and determination, their hard work and sacrifice, with equal measures of resolve.

"Without that resolve, we shall not gain our popsicle.

"Yes, Malia Ann, we have a popsicle to pursue, and we must resolve to pursue that popsicle until we have that popsicle in our hands, ready to consume – to consume without fear, to consume without favour."

And so we move on, as move on we must. No man, no woman, no child, no nation, ever reached his destination anywhere by standing still.

To move on is the only way to reach your destination. To reach our destination, we must move on.

The man or woman who stands still stays in the same place. And that place may be a far distance from the place to which they had once intended to travel.

Time and again, men and women have moved on, I tell Malia Ann.

Time and again, they have moved away from the ice cream truck, towards the beach, in search of, yes, the sand – but also the ocean.

Yes – this was their journey.

Time and again, these noble men and women have toiled to construct their sandcastles, employing no material but the sand beneath their feet.

"Let us go build that sandcastle," I tell Malia Ann. "And in building this, our sandcastle, let us reaffirm once again the greatness of this nation."

"But Daddy" she says. "I'm bored with all this talk! Let's just get on and dig our sandcastle!"

"You do well to remind me, little Malia Ann, that action is the natural accompaniment to words. Faced with words, our Founding Fathers sought action." Yes, action was what they sought.

And their ideals still hold. The success of our nation has always depended not on words alone, but on action.

And repetition, too, has played its noble part.

And repetition, too, has played its noble part.

And repetition, too, has played its noble part.

By the soft lapping of the water's edge, we endeavor to build our sandcastle, my little daughter and I.

This is our journey, I tell Malia Ann. It is a journey that has oft been undertaken, in weather both hot and cold, by many millions of our fellow Americans.

Each time a new generation has seen sand lain flat, they have risen up and done what's needed to be done.

From sand alone, they have built they castles. Today, Malia Anne, we are called to build another. Ours will be a castle that shall withstand all the elements. The sea shall not flatten it, nor shall the fierce winds prevail against it."

"Daddy," says Malia Ann. "Are you kidding?"

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

GARY! GARY! WOULD YOU MIND POSING FOR THE CAMERAS PLEASE MATE?
SORRY FELLAS. TOO BUSY...
PLEASE, GARY. JUST A QUICK WAVE TO THE CAMERA? A LITTLE GESTURE...
NOT TODAY... I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
I'M GOING INDOORS TO HAVE A NICE CUP OF TEA...
OKAY. FAIR ENOUGH. HOW MANY SUGARS DO YOU TAKE?
SNAP
SNAP
OH DAMNIT.

Literary Review

The quivers of Jordan

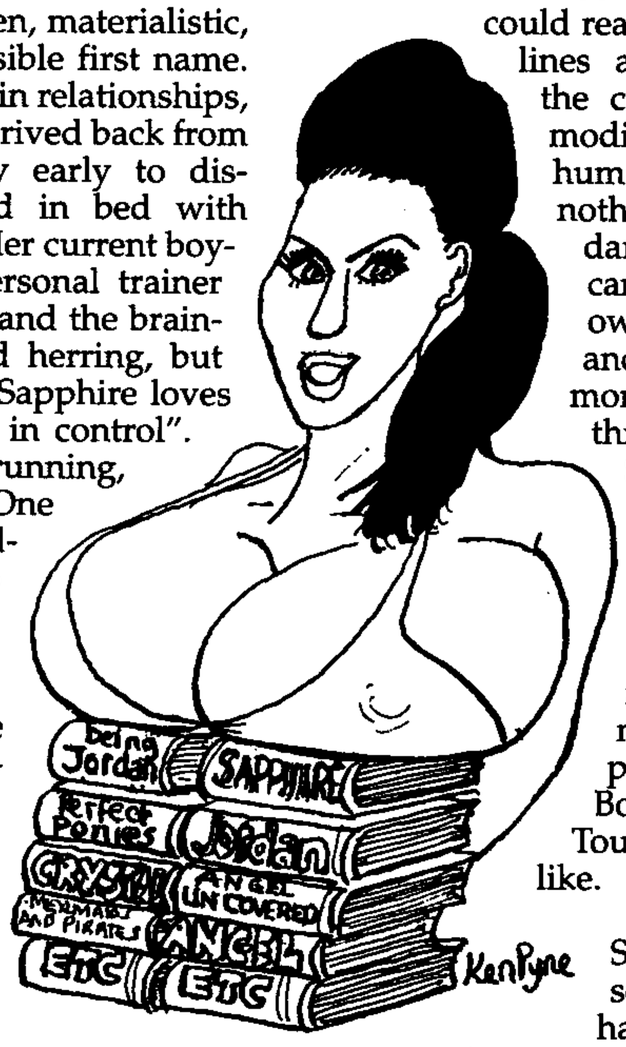
Sapphire
Katie Price
(Century, £12.99)

ANOTHER summer, another novel with Katie Price's name on the front cover. In its first week of publication, this book sold 21,000 copies. The second bestselling hardback novel sold a quarter of the number. What's going on? Or as Sapphire herself would say, WTF?

Sapphire Jones is in the now traditional mould of Price heroines: beautiful, hard-bitten, materialistic, doesn't have a sensible first name. She "didn't believe in relationships, not since she had arrived back from work unexpectedly early to discover her husband in bed with another woman". Her current boyfriend, Jay, is a personal trainer with "abs of steel" and the brainpower of a pickled herring, but that's no problem: Sapphire loves "being 100 percent in control". Jay likes going running, and as Chapter One begins she has inadvertently agreed to go for a jog with him along the Brighton seafront. "Fuck! Sapphire had completely forgotten. She hated running." So to distract him she gives him "a consolation blowjob", as almost anyone would in the circumstances. "When she'd rewarded him with a top-of-the-range BJ he reciprocated with some mind-blowing oral work on her."

After a quick shower, she goes out to meet her friends Jazz and Sam and drink vodka and tonic. Jazz has "shoulder-length white-blonde hair" she flicks back so often she starts to risk whiplash. Sam is the fat one: size-eight Sapphire despairs of her lack of self-control. Sapphire herself has "dark blue eyes, full sensuous lips and long jet-black hair", and runs a company organising raucous hen weekends. An old schoolfriend rings up, now a soap star who wears too much slap. "I'll give you the best fucking weekend ever!" Sapphire promises her. Meanwhile, Jay is cooking dinner. "'Fancy coming into the bedroom, trainer boy?' 'It'll have to be quick. I don't want my Thai sauce to spoil.'"

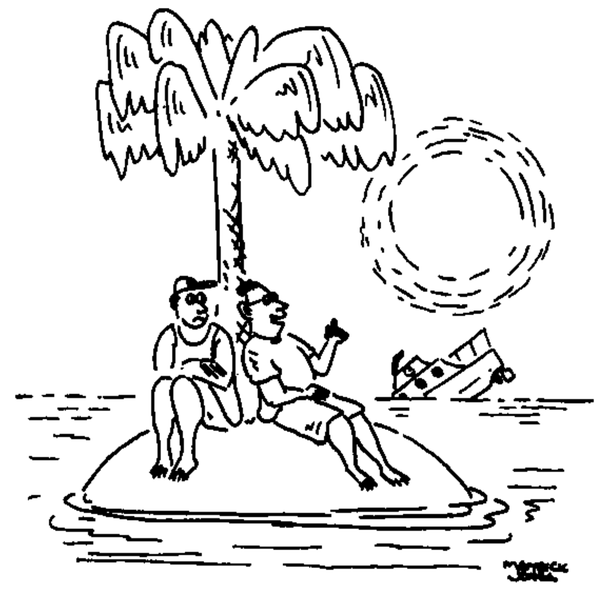
It would be possible, of course, to take all this too seriously. You could read between the lines and see there the complete commodification of human life, where nothing is worth a damn unless it can be bought, owned, flaunted and sold (or more likely, thrown away). Seen through a more generous lens, Sapphire is just an old-fashioned romance with modern trappings: Mills & Boon with Tourette's, if you like.



Eventually Sapphire meets sexy Ryan. "He handed her his card and their fingers touched against each other. Sapphire tried to ignore the chain reaction that this triggered inside her, but she couldn't deny the jolt of attraction."

Price's long-serving ghost, Rebecca Farnworth, may or may not have been laughing out loud when she wrote these words, but her readers won't be. For Farnworth is playing a clever game. She writes Jordan's autobiographies as well as her novels, and as the volumes pile up, it becomes clear that her boss is also, in some sense, her greatest fictional creation. An interesting if minor character in this one is Georgia the soap star "and her fake-tanned cleavage". ("Her boobs had cost her enough, she was always saying, she may as well get her money's worth.") Sapphire herself turns out to be a spoilt, wilful little princess, who judges men mainly by their willingness to buy her expensive presents. "She knew her control freakery wasn't her most loveable quality. The trouble was she'd had to rely on herself for so long she didn't know how to behave in any other way."

Those 21,000 readers know that these books aren't by Katie Price in any meaningful sense of the word. But they are about Katie Price in every meaningful sense of the word. It's an ingenious and so far wildly profitable strategy that depends only on Price never finding the time to read any of the books: a fairly safe bet, one would have thought.



"Obviously the first thing to do is start a literary festival"

Ghost blusters

Twenties Girl
Sophie Kinsella
(Bantam, 18.99)

HELP! I'm a shallow twenty-something with routine boyfriend troubles and workplace woes, and my life's just been flapper-jacked by the ghost of a 1920s party girl.

She's actually my recently deceased great-aunt Sadie, and she was meant to have been decently laid to rest. How was I to know, as one of the few family members who bothered to turn up at the local crematorium, that she would suddenly latch on to me with her supernatural presence and start hectoring me about some long-lost necklace? Haven't I got enough to deal with, lying to my concerned parents about my recent break-up with boyfriend Josh and the fact that my business partner has absconded, leaving me to run our headhunting agency single-handed?

Yes, I'm a typical chick-lit heroine. Lara's the name, and making a pathetic muddle of everything while somehow winning through to the happy ending despite a series of highly contrived setbacks. As for Sadie, we all thought she was just this ancient biddy in a nursing home, 105 when she died. But she's come back as a ghost of herself in her 23-year-old prime, a Charleston-dancing flapper, 1927 vintage, complete with long swishy dresses and heavy-duty make-up. And as superficial as she is supernatural.

I can see and hear her but no one else can, so when I talk to her I have to pretend I'm on my mobile phone, otherwise people think I'm loopy. But although other people can't see or hear her, she can plant alien thoughts in their brains, which they think they've heard from some sort of "inner voice". Thus she can persuade them to do crazy things without knowing why.

Sadie's ghostly presence and powers have their comic possibilities, a few of which are milked for all they're worth. She snoops on my work clients and helps me in my job, and she snoops on my ex-boyfriend and even helps me get back together with him.

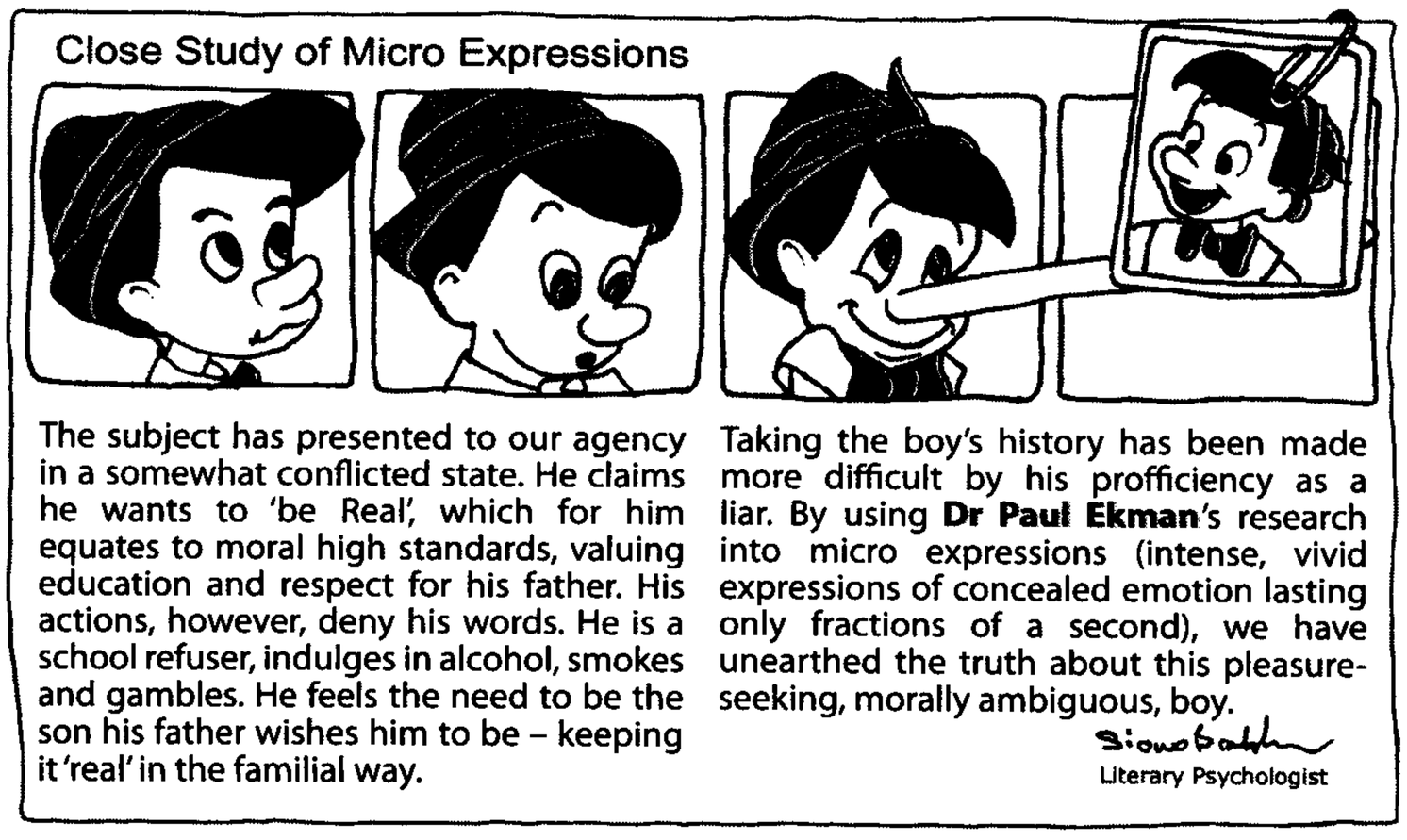
But when she gets the "sizzle" for a man herself it's me, as her human avatar, who has to date him, and then dress myself up in ridiculous retro-1920s gear, so Sadie can vicariously enjoy one last fling.

The number of times I seem to say "I can't believe I'm doing this" is, er, unbelievable. But it helps that I'm a bit slow on the uptake, so that something can become completely obvious to all my readers long before I seem to twig. Such as the fact that Josh is a feeble-minded flake, or that my uncle Bill Lington, self-made millionaire and founder of the Lington's coffee shop empire, is actually a complete phoney. Suffice it to say that the self-styled business guru is the villain of the piece, vigorously semaphored as such from page one, so I have to be particularly naïve and stupid not to notice the fact.

As for Sadie's ghostly tricks, "Thank God she just stuck to meddling with my love life," I sigh to any readers still following me on page 288. "Thank God she hasn't gone around trying to influence world leaders or anything. She could have caused global meltdown." The book might have been a bit more interesting if she had, of course, but this is chick lit and a feeble convoluted plot revolving around office, boyfriends and family is sadly the most we can expect.

It is futile to complain. Sophie Kinsella lotta books (geddit?), especially to undomesticated goddesses who happen to be shopaholics. She can shift the merchandise. A movie would have its moments. A sequel is surely on the cards.

So I wouldn't give up on this ghost just yet.


Close Study of Micro Expressions
The subject has presented to our agency in a somewhat conflicted state. He claims he wants to 'be Real', which for him equates to moral high standards, valuing education and respect for his father. His actions, however, deny his words. He is a school refuser, indulges in alcohol, smokes and gambles. He feels the need to be the son his father wishes him to be – keeping it 'real' in the familial way.
Taking the boy's history has been made more difficult by his profficiency as a liar. By using Dr Paul Ekman's research into micro expressions (intense, vivid expressions of concealed emotion lasting only fractions of a second), we have unearthed the truth about this pleasure-seeking, morally ambiguous, boy.
Literary Psychologist

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ MARGARET ATWOOD arrives in Britain with a mighty fanfare next week to launch her new novel *The Year of the Flood*, a dystopian eco-apocalyptic satire.

However, the instructions sent to organisers of events on her epic promotional tour – starting at the Edinburgh Festival, on through Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada and the US – make one wonder if Mariah Carey is coming too.

Atwood has decided that all her readings must take place in churches or cathedrals. She demands that all handbills or programmes for the events must be printed on paper that is "100 percent post-consumer recycled, processed chlorine free (uses no virgin tree fibre and no chlorine or chlorine compounds), carries FSC, Chlorine Free Association, biogas and Ancient Forest Friendly certification and trademarks".

Then there's the guidance on food and drink: no bottled water; coffee must be "shade-grown organic coffee"; and "if there is a reception with wine, please serve organic local wine". Not a pint of Heavy, then.

■ SLEDGING involving literary grandes dames is a rare treat, so it was agreeable to find Dame AS Byatt giving an interview in which she slated "faction" in which novelists go "into the mind of the real unknown dead – it feels like an appropriation of others' lives and privacy… a kind of attack."

That the interview was with the Booker Prize's organisers underlined the likelihood that the book in her sights was Hilary Mantel's Thomas Cromwell-centred *Wolf Hall* – the 2/1 bookies' favourite for the prize, for which Byatt's *The Children's Book*, also longlisted, is rated only 10/1.

Byatt has made a tellingly timed *volte face*, as her 2000 book *On Histories and Stories: Essays* is a defence of the historical novel, which praises recent examples including Mantel's French Revolution faction *A Place of Greater Safety*.

The rethink also represents a sudden, dramatic lowering of the temperature in a relationship that has hitherto seemed friendly. Mantel was a judge when Byatt's *Possession* won the Booker in 1990; relations were clearly still cordial when Byatt chose Mantel's *Beyond Black* as a book of the year four years ago. Yet now the dame appears to be behaving like the literary equivalent of a football star rubbishing an opposition player in the tunnel as they wait to run on. Whatever next – will Baroness (Ruth) Rendell give Baroness (PD) James a handbagging, as both have books coming out soon on the same day?

■ "WHAT does it mean to be a writer?" the novelist Adam Thirlwell was asked by the *FT*. "It means to be constantly and sadly and compulsively in the process of making your life unreal, and turning it into a form." Well, maybe if you write fiction like Thirlwell's, it does.

And his influences? "Laurence Sterne, Milan Kundera, PG Wodehouse, Robert Musil, Gertrude Stein, Denis Diderot, Bohumil Hrabal, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, James Joyce, Evelyn Waugh and Henry James." Reviewers who identified his first novel, *Politics* as a Kundera pastiche and his recent second, *The Escape*, as an equally blatant Philip Roth pastiche may wonder what the rest of these all-stars have contributed.

■ WITH the autumn run-up to Christmas, crunch time for publishers, about to start, some of the contenders for best upmarket seasonal swizz are emerging.

Faber and Profile have teamed up to boil down Alan Bennett's 2005 non-fiction miscellany *Untold Stories* into *A Life Like Other People's*, retaining only the memoir of his parents – so instead of paying £9.99 (£5.95 on Amazon) for a 670-page paperback of *Untold Stories*, punters will hopefully be induced to spend £12.99 on a 240-page hardback with no new material.

A good try, but it's topped by Penguin's *The Original of Laura*, a Nabokov work-in-progress that the late author told his wife to burn but his son has decided to publish. Mostly consisting of 138 scanned index cards, generally just a paragraph long, and transcriptions of their contents, it is due in November but has already been reviewed in the US magazine *Publishers Weekly*: "This very unfinished work reads largely like an outline… it would be a mistake for readers to come to this expecting anything resembling a novel."

Skimpy, and really only of interest to scholars and obsessives, in other words, but Penguin is counting on rushed festive shoppers shelling out a preposterous £25 for this "Modern Classic".

'Bookworm'

"Friday – Yes that's good for me. Is Friday good for you?"

FIRST DRAFTS

Chaucer: the Miller's Tale

LIBRARY NEWS

■ WORDS to strike fear into the hearts of Lambeth's library users: "This property would be ideal for sale for a private residential flat conversion."

Lambeth council has earmarked four of the borough's nine libraries for possible closure, with others at risk of downgrading and restricted opening hours. The Grade II-listed Carnegie Library in Herne Hill is the property described as an ideal residential development, while Durning Library in Kennington is "not fit for purpose", although there was "local residential interest in the library". Minet and South Lambeth libraries are also under threat as the council says they are too close together.

The intended sell-off of library buildings was tucked away in the 500 pages of appendices to the council's "property performance report", which was endorsed after just three minutes of debate, according to opposition Lib Dems, who describe the plans as "a fire-sale of valuable community assets". The report proposes having just four proper libraries in the borough, plus three "mini" libraries. Swimming pools and public toilets are also on the list of properties that could be flogged to help Lambeth deal with a £35m backlog of maintenance to its buildings.

Pseuds Corner

I'm just too free and liberated for university.
AMBER LE BON (daughter of Yasmin and Simon), *Daily Telegraph*

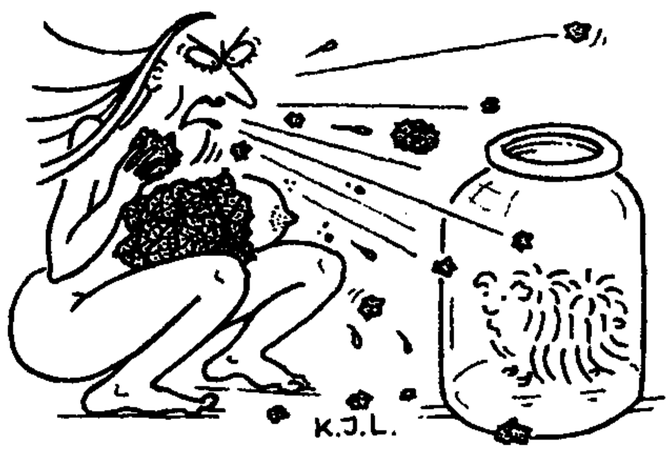
As the crowd cheered Haddin's departure, Flintoff stood in the middle of the pitch, like an Emperor demanding the loyalty of his subjects. After he knocked over Peter Siddle's castle he got down on bended knee. This was no longer top level sport. It was Nureyev at Covent Garden, Garland at Carnegie Hall, Parker blowing his horn…
MICHAEL HENDERSON, *Daily Telegraph*

That this is football's apogee is not seriously in dispute by anyone with an anima. Yet it might legitimately be argued that this also represents the apex of all sports and, if you're feeling particularly grandiloquent, of all art.
ROB SMYTH on Carlos Alberto's goal for Brazil against Italy in the 1970 World Cup Final, *Guardian*

Because of her mother's work, Florence did have an early exposure to Renaissance painting, which may have had an influence on the somewhat visceral world view expressed in her lyrics. As a child she was particularly fascinated by Mantegna's *Circumcision of Christ* and by various paintings of the martyrdom of St Agatha, who had her breasts cut off.
NICK WELCH talking about his daughter Florence, of Florence and the Machine, *Mail on Sunday*

And, as well as its complement of blue and white crocks, each room has a set of decorative letters, in assorted colours, sizes and styles, perched on mantelpieces and window ledges. Perry, you understand, is obsessed with typefaces – which explains the names of their children, Perpetua, 7, Helvetica, 4, and Clarendon, 1.
At home with the Haydn Taylor family, *Sunday Times*

I am proud to have introduced the Zagreb TV audience to Gekidan Kaitasha and their show



Sadism, Masochism, Fascism, Fetishism, Feminism: Tokyo Discipline, where in one scene a naked, angry-looking female performer devoured and spat out an entire raw Savoy cabbage in front of a hungry-looking guinea pig trapped inside a glass jar.
VANDA BUTKOVIC, *Firefly* (magazine published by the Central School of Speech and Drama)

CONTRIBUTORS: P. Bowen, Anne Tudor, Neil MacDonald, Steve Turner, P. Whiting, Robin Miller.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE

Libyan takeaway

EARLIER this year the Eye predicted that the Scottish courts would hear only a small part of the appeal of Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi before it would be abandoned and he would return to Libya to die with his family (Eyes passim).

Ever since Jack Straw, the justice minister, stuck two fingers up at parliament's human-rights committee and rushed through the prisoner transfer deal with our new best friend, Muammar Gaddafi, Megrahi's release was always on the cards. After all, the deal suited all the main players, cementing relations with Libya as well as halting an appeal that threatened to prove a major embarrassment to both the UK and US governments. News last week that Megrahi was to be returned on "compassionate grounds", because he was dying of cancer, briefly raised hopes that his appeal could continue in his absence. But that was never going to be allowed to happen, and Megrahi, who had always said he would never return to Libya until his name was cleared, duly dropped his appeal.

The casualty is justice and the truth about the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, which claimed 270 victims. For, as readers of the Eye's special report by Paul Foot in 2001 are well aware, Megrahi's trial was a travesty. There were the testimonies of two witnesses who were paid huge sums by the CIA – one a notorious liar and paid informer, Abdul Giaka, who first put Megrahi in the frame; the other the Maltese shopkeeper who identified him as the man who bought clothes said to have been packed round the bomb. He had been shown photographs of Megrahi.

Some forensic evidence appeared to have been tampered with and much evidence withheld – including the fact that there had been a serious breach in security at Heathrow at the Pan Am baggage area in the early hours of 21 December 1988, the day of the bombing. A padlock on the door had been professionally cut and the area open to intruders. Coupled with the testimony of baggage handlers about two extra cases going on board – one matching the description of the bag said to have carried the bomb – this would have featured heavily in Megrahi's appeal.

And then, of course, there were the similarities to the modus operandi of a Syrian-backed terrorist cell operating out of Frankfurt, including altitude-sensitive timers, which the judges did not allow Megrahi's defence team to raise at trial.

Because the appeal in Edinburgh has been dogged by delay, none of these troubling issues have been aired. And now, short of the public inquiry demanded by the families of the victims, they never will be.

Allowing the only man convicted of the bombing to be returned to Libya has produced howls of outrage on both sides of the Atlantic. (That is, apart from the rare voices of the UN observer at the trial and some of the British victims' families, who have studied every aspect of the case and believe there has been a miscarriage of justice.) That outrage would be better focused on the governments and justice systems that have ensured we have all been denied the full truth about Lockerbie.

● *Paul Foot's 2001 special report, Lockerbie – The Flight from Justice, is available to download at www.private-eye.co.uk, price £5*

PUBS & PUBMEN

Last ordures

THE *Eye*'s recent articles on the crisis in Britain's pubs has pointed the finger at egregious "pubcos" such as Enterprise Inns and Punch Taverns, which dominate the sector, owning thousands of premises, while being run by property speculators who have very little real interest in beer, pubs or the people who use them. So how have they avoided serious scrutiny until now?

The pubcos may not be much good at running pubs as community assets, keeping customers happy or helping their tenants make a decent living, but they have been very good at cultivating influential friends who will ignore or suppress inconvenient truths.

High on the list is the **All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group**. Unsurprisingly, this is the largest of the all-party groups in the Commons, with a membership of some 300 thirsty MPs who are keen to express their commitment to, er, drinking free beer. Chaired by Labour MP and professional Yorkshireman John Grogan, the group had enormous influence until earlier this year, when Channel 4's *Dispatches* showed that its benefactors might not be as cuddly as first thought.

The cash to fund the group comes from the usual suspects: Enterprise Inns, Punch Taverns, Greene King, Marstons, Scottish & Newcastle. With the influence of so many MPs being available so cheaply – less than five grand needed from each of these companies – it's hardly surprising that Enterprise Inns' chief exec Ted Tuppen was happy to refer to MPs as "morons" last year. But his timing could have been better, given that he was to give oral evidence to MPs on the business and enterprise select committee shortly afterwards, and Tuppen's company got a spanking in the subsequent report.

The secretary of the Beer Group is the dapper Robert Humphreys, renowned as much for the lavish annual dinner laid on for MPs and donors as for his political acumen and sartorial dash. Dissidents from the Beer Group have now formed a new all-party group under another Yorkshireman, Lib Dem MP Greg Mulholland.

Untainted by pubco or brewery money, the All-Party Parliamentary Save the Pub Group has taken a strong position against the "tie".

The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) has long been the surrogate mother of the brewers, washing their dirty laundry, standing up for them even when wrong and soothing them when they get upset. The BBPA's media spokesman is the witless Mark Hastings, best known for making a fool of himself at Westminster with unamusing fancy dress characters such as "Mr Pinty" and "Waddy" as part of his ill-conceived "Axe the Tax" campaign. Many believe the BBPA represents ordinary publicans – in fact it spins on behalf of the big brewers and property companies.

Hacks from the pub trade press, **The Morning Advertiser** and **The Publican**, have been living it up with pubco and brewery executives for years and dutifully penning favourable copy. They might as well have been in-house magazines for the pubcos. As usual, sponsorship of dinners and awards was provided by the pubcos and everyone got on famously (except actual publicans, of course). In recent months, faced with increasing evidence that the pubco "model" is a wrong 'un, the trade hacks have grown more critical.

It seems that other former friends might be changing sides, too. In recent years consumer group the **Campaign for Real Ale (Camra)** has been seen by many as too soft on the pubcos. But enough is enough, it seems, and to the sound of 100,000 pairs of sandals marching on Westminster, Camra has submitted a "supercomplaint" about the beer tie to the Office of Fair Trading. Having been trailed in advance by an open letter from Beer Group chair, John Grogan, many assumed the complaint was a ruse to head off real scrutiny (*Eye* 1238); but Camra chief exec Mike Benner, emboldened by the findings of the select committee and stung by criticism in the *Eye*, has finally put the boot into the pubcos and the abuse of the beer tie.

Camra's complaint blames "anti-competitive practices in the UK pub market which are resulting in high prices in pubs, lower amenity, restricted choice and pub closures". Benner adds that *"exploitation of 'beer tie' agreements and the unfair method of setting pub rents are harming consumers and society as a whole"*. The BBPA and pubco bosses are furious. Cheers!

'Publican'

FLOOD PROTECTION

Muddying the water

IN THE true spirit of New Labour accounting, government plans for better flood protection are to be paid for out of the money saved by, er, having better flood protection.

Following the Pitt Review, which called for "urgent and fundamental" changes to the UK's flood prevention after the devastating 2007 floods, the draft Flood and Water Management Bill is due to be introduced in the next parliament. Last year, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs promised that all the extra costs involved in meeting Sir Michael Pitt's recommendations would be "fully funded". After years of cutbacks and postponements in flood defence spending (*Eyes passim*), the work was certainly needed.

But where, in these straitened times, was all this funding to come from? According to the consultation paper on the draft bill: "The transfer of private sewers, together with savings from better local flood-risk management, are expected to more than cover the additional activities that local authorities will be required to perform… by the bill and the government's response to Sir Michael Pitt's review."

For many local authorities, the transfer of sewers will raise next to nothing, so most of the estimated £72m-a-year cost of local flood risk management (FRM) must somehow be borrowed from the future. Of course, post-flood clean-up is generally more expensive than prevention would have been, but that doesn't mean the councils actually have the money now.

The National Flood Forum (NFF) says it has no confidence that there will be any tangible funding to improve FRM after all. Its response to the consultation says last year's promise of full funding now "looks more like a confidence trick, cheating flood-affected communities of the resources required to deliver the promises of the Pitt Review and reduce the misery of flooding".

Surrey county council has also spotted that the sums don't work, with cabinet member for the environment Dr Lynne Hack pointing out that it is "unrealistic to expect the costs of the new role will be balanced by savings from avoiding flood damage." The Local Government Association's response also questions how members can spend money they haven't saved yet, saying, "This would only be a future saving against future spend, rather than a real resource that could be deployed now."

NFF has also criticised the bill for doing nothing to tackle the situation where so many organisations are involved in dealing with floods that homeowners may have to make up to a dozen phone calls to find out who is responsible for the water lapping around their knees.

PRISON DEATH

Fatal neglect

A LONDON coroner has written to the home secretary to express concerns about training and healthcare in Belmarsh prison, following the death of an epileptic inmate who had been restrained by five prison officers for more than 30 minutes.

While being held face down on the floor, Godfrey Moyo suffered two seizures and periods of unconsciousness and never recovered.

Andrew Walker's three-page report came after an inquest jury returned a damning narrative verdict, outlining a catalogue of failure and neglect at the London prison which contributed to the death of 25-year-old Moyo, who was on remand for a murder – a charge he denied. It said that action needed to be taken immediately to prevent the risks of other deaths in the jail. There was a complete failure to understand epilepsy and no treatment plan, no rescue plan or appropriate medication available for Mr Moyo. He had been fatally treated as a "discipline" issue.

Yet it was "well known" that following a seizure, Mr Moyo "would unintentionally become violent" – something that occurs very rarely with epilepsy. Thus when Mr Moyo suffered a severe fit in his cell in January 2005 and cellmates summoned staff, a decision was taken not to enter his cell until a dog and handler arrived. But when he came round and started to assault one of his cellmates, officers went in to restrain him.

Although they had control within seconds, the officers continued to hold Mr Moyo face down on the landing, even when he suffered further fits, and periods of unconsciousness – and even when a nurse had been summoned. Yet as the inquest heard, control and restraint training should have flagged up the dangers of "positional asphyxia" and made it clear that anyone showing signs of distress should be taken off their front and be placed immediately in the recovery position.

When a second nurse arrived, an unconscious Mr Moyo was finally lifted from his prone position and carried to an intensive-care cell in the jail's medical centre. Guidance that anyone suffering more than one seizure should go straight to hospital was ignored. Although unconscious, he was still being restrained and was placed in a kneeling position against the bed with his upper chest and head resting on the mattress.

No doctor was to hand, but over the telephone one prescribed a 2ml injection of the tranquilliser Lorazepam – in the absence of more appropriate medication. After injecting Mr Moyo, the second nurse and the prison officer left him alone, supposedly monitoring his condition through the cell hatch. Later he was found to have stopped breathing and an ambulance was finally called, but by then it was too late. Efforts to resuscitate him failed.

The jury's verdict and coroner's complaint to the Home Office make grim reading. Deborah Coles, co-director of Inquest, which monitors deaths in custody, said it would be raising the serious issues involved in the case in parliament: "Mr Moyo was treated as a discipline and control problem rather than a human being in urgent need of medical treatment and care. The responsibility for his death rests with the prison service."

The service has already announced a review of control and restraint techniques in the wake of Mr Moyo's death – which proves it has learned nothing from similar reviews and inquiries into the death of Kenneth Severin at the same jail ten years earlier.

Severin was a 25-year-old inmate who suffered from schizophrenia and had been remanded into Belmarsh for trying to break into the house in which he used to live. After becoming agitated and considered a "risk to himself", he was restrained face down by seven prison officers and died of... "positional asphyxia". Just like Mr Moyo, he was treated as a discipline and control problem, rather than a man with health problems.

LEGAL NEWS

Dissing Cousins

THE reputation of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) is becoming increasingly tarnished.

Not only are lawyers and campaigners totally disillusioned with its cavalier dismissal of cases where there is overwhelming evidence pointing to a miscarriage of justice (like that of Gary Critchley in the last *Eye*), there is mounting concern about avoidable delay, which leaves those claiming innocence rotting in jail, unable to get an appeal hearing.

Like Karl Watson (*Eye* 1223), for example, whose case was originally submitted to the CCRC no fewer than 12 years ago with new evidence, kept secret from his original trial, which cast grave doubts on his conviction for the 1991 murder of John Shippey, a playboy businessman who had been having an affair with Watson's mother. His body was found, having been repeatedly stabbed in the chest, in his burnt-out car near Merstham, Surrey.

Watson had originally been excluded from police enquiries because he had an alibi. But two years later he was arrested on the evidence of Bruce Cousins, a man wanted by police for other matters but found in possession of what was described as a "script" saying that he, Cousins, had been involved in the murder. There was no mention of Watson, but later Cousins gave police a statement saying that he saw Watson stab Shippey and then helped him dispose of the body. Except that Cousins had mental-health problems and, as psychiatrists had warned, would say anything, "regardless of his memory of the facts". In fact, so concerned was one psychiatrist about his reliability that he alerted the Crown Prosecution Service.

Unfortunately, none of this was passed to Watson's defence lawyers, and at Watson's appeal against conviction in January 1996, Lord Taylor, then the Lord Chief Justice, made clear that the conviction stood, "on the basis that Mr Cousins as a witness could be relied upon". When Watson's lawyers found out the following year, they put this fresh information before the CCRC. The commission, however, was unmoved and Watson stayed in prison.

Eight years later, Harriet Harman QC, then minister of state at the Department of Constitutional Affairs, wrote to Watson's MP, Richard Ottaway, accepting that not only had material concerning Cousins' psychiatric state been in the possession of the CPS, but that it had indeed been withheld from the defence.

In a civil case last year, Watson successfully sued his former defence lawyers for negligence. Mr Justice Owen ruled it "likely" that Watson had been denied a fair trial and ordered that his judgement be made available for Watson to use in his bid to get his conviction quashed.

Finally, the CCRC wrote to Maslen Merchant, Watson's new lawyer, to say it was about to "fast-track" his case through the system.

And now? The CCRC has deferred its decision, on the grounds that further work needs to be done. Meanwhile Watson enters his 17th year in jail.

CDC/ACTIS

Ugandan discussions

THREE months after parliament's public accounts committee found that Britain's international development fund CDC, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, couldn't demonstrate that it reduced poverty, the fund has produced a 90-page advertising brochure purporting to show "Growth for Development".

The brochure boils down to the assertion that profits equal development, and that since CDC has transformed into an investor in private equity funds that put cash into several hundred companies, it can claim credit for their financial returns, numbers of employees and supposedly generous tax payments to developing country governments.

Oddly, however, CDC refuses to disclose the internal development impact reports it has been producing for years – which might give a more balanced picture – as to do so would "prejudice the commercial interests of CDC". Nor will it divulge details of the tax payments of investee companies which also remain "commercially confidential".

In line with the PR approach to development, even the independent assessment of the National Audit Office has been subtly finessed. Last December the auditor noted that by investing in profitable businesses in poorer countries, "CDC will have made a credible contribution to economic development in those countries..." – the subtext being "who wouldn't?" – before going on to question the contribution to poverty reduction given the nature of the businesses it backs. In the hands of the NAO spinmeisters, the finding became a categorical: "CDC has made a credible contribution to economic development in poor countries..." [emphasis added].

And naturally the report made no assessment of the developmental harm caused by its retreat from smaller rural investments with greater poverty relief results in favour of larger investments such as shopping centres that attract money anyway, nor of its diversion of development cash from sub-Saharan African countries in favour of the booming economies of India and China. The PAC conclusion that "there is limited evidence of CDC's effects on poverty reduction" was nowhere to be seen either.

The approach is typified by the gloss CDC puts on one particularly controversial investment, the privatised Ugandan electricity distribution network Umeme. Amid the puff here is no room for disclosure of increased bills since the 2005 privatisation, which, according to local reports, leave impoverished Ugandans paying the second highest tariffs in the world (after Sweden) despite huge public subsidies. Nor, unsurprisingly, is there any mention of the Ugandan government's view of the company. When, in June, the Kampala parliament's natural resources committee recommended that Umeme's contract should be cancelled, energy minster Hillary Onek agreed that "Umeme should have been terminated long ago, but we need to scientifically handle it".

Meanwhile, the Umeme chairman who resigned in May has had his home raided by police investigating the abuse of public subsidies.

● Umeme was one of the first investments made by CDC following the 2004 sell-off of its fund management arm (as Actis) to senior CDC executives, including ex-chief executive Paul Fletcher. The sale was hailed by the then international development secretary Hilary Benn as "pioneering" and a step in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Sadly it hasn't quite worked out this way. While Actis piled CDC's (ie the British taxpayer's) money into Third World privatisations and shopping malls, it was extracting it from more developmentally important agriculture, which now accounts for just 5 percent of CDC's business.

Five years on, who should be the environment minister last week warning of dangerous food insecurity as investment in production is far outstripped by growth in demand? Step forward... Hilary Benn.

● Fletcher and fellow CDC executives have done spectacularly well from the buy-out deal. They paid £373,000 for 60 percent of Actis, before immediately receiving £2.3m in "post-transactional" bonuses and going on to earn millions. Now, in its latest accounts, the department for international development, which retains 40 percent, has put a value on its stake of £1.677m, implying that the Actis management's share is worth around £2.5m. This is based just on assets rather than profitability (which would suggest it's worth a lot more), but even so it represents a 570 percent return on the 2004 outlay, ignoring the bonus and the subsequent bumper payouts.

Not bad for a deal that CDC and DfID continue to insist was struck at a fair price for the British taxpayer and the world's poor.

FURTHER EDUCASHUN SPECIAL

Satire ire

SALFORD University has sacked sociology lecturer Gary Duke for "bringing the university into disrepute". His crime was to produce a spoof "vice consul's newsletter" during the fight against 150 job losses which were announced earlier this year to help pay for the university's new base at Salford MediaCity.

"There is a long satirical tradition within our university system," said Mr Duke after his disciplinary hearing. "*Private Eye* and other publications emerged from it. These newsletters were produced within this tradition. They were popular. They gave people a sense that at least someone was fighting back when people were being bullied and hounded out of their jobs."

Mr Duke was not sacked, however, without a completely fair and unprejudiced disciplinary hearing. It just seemed unfair and prejudiced because, he discovered, the university had advertised his job before it had taken place. He now claims his human rights may have been infringed.

Perhaps he should take the matter up with the university's new chancellor, who has some experience in this field. Step forward Irene Khan – secretary-general of Amnesty International!

Wild young Bucks

THE vast Manchester College empire has been hit by a strike over bullying at its Buckinghamshire outpost, as teachers of young offenders complained that serious allegations have not been dealt with.

Teaching for the 80 young offenders at Oakhill Secure Training Centre near Milton Keynes is contracted out to Manchester College. Formed by a merger between City College Manchester and Manchester College of Art and Technology (Mancat) last year, it is one of Europe's biggest further education providers. But the college's relationship with the teaching unions has been strained ever since Mancat principal Peter Tavernor fell out with his own trade union education department, which used to provide courses for legal and health and safety reps from all unions. He closed the unit down in 2004 (*Eye* 1110).

Manchester took over education at Oakhill in August 2008. Just a year later, only 13 out of the original 34 staff are still in post, and last month teachers went on a one-day strike to complain about "terrible conditions", bullying and harassment. That strike followed one by staff in Manchester itself earlier in July, over job cuts and course closures following the merger.

Georgian mildew

LONDON South Bank University proudly describes itself as "an engine for urban regeneration", but the sad saga of the university's ownership of crumbling historic terraces in Southwark suggests that engine has stalled.

In the 1990s, the Georgian properties on London Road and Borough Road were set to be bulldozed to make way for new lecture halls and a sports centre, but the university's plans were thwarted when the buildings were listed by English Heritage. The former Duke of Clarence pub, at one end of the London Road terrace, is now being squatted, unusually with the support of the local traders association, which has been calling for the university to allow the buildings to be brought back into use for many years.

The plight of the university's derelict 1820s buildings was highlighted a decade ago by the *Eye*'s Piloti (*Eye* 985), since when the university did finally stump up the cash to make them weatherproof and restore the elegant facades. But that work was finished two years ago and the terraces remain empty, with the interiors described as unfit for habitation. They remain on English Heritage's "buildings at risk" register.

It isn't just the architectural waste that's frustrating local people and businesses – the area needs more housing, while real shop fronts, instead of the faux ones printed on the university's hoardings, would help to breathe life into the community.

The university is still trying to make its mind up about the buildings' long-term future and says it welcomes discussion from all interested parties. After years of inaction, locals' patience is wearing a bit thin.

Stowed away

ALTHOUGH Scottish colleges have been spared the massive cost of the Learning and Skills Council debacle (in which the English further education funding body recklessly over-committed itself by £2.7bn), several are facing financial troubles of their own.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is withholding £1m in funding from Glasgow's Stow College and may yet claw back substantially more after Stow was found to have pocketed £3m in public funds for construction courses that cost it just £867,000 to run. The courses had been running for several years and by 2007-08 Stow received £1m for construction industry training, which it then contracted out to external training firm Sibbald – whose boss and founder David Sibbald is also on the board of Stow College.

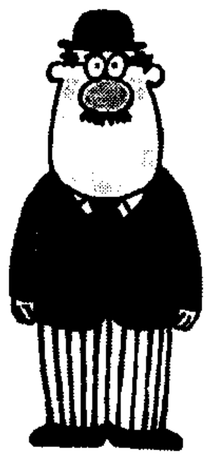
Hugh Henry, convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee, said: "Almost like a broker, Stow College kept what I gather was quite a significant surplus."

While there's no suggestion that Sibbald or other college bosses trousered the cash personally, the profit from the hugely inflated claims certainly left the college flush with cash. Last month the SFC warned all of Scotland's 43 FE colleges to review their external contracts for similar issues.

Henry's committee also recently heard that police have now been investigating the accounts of Kilmarnock College for more than a year. For the second year running, auditors were unable to sign off the accounts due to the investigation, which relates to the "relationship between the college and associated bodies".

TAX HAVENS

Avoiding the issue



"HISTORIC" and "groundbreaking" were just two of the boasts for the tax agreement signed between treasury minister Stephen Timms and his counterpart from Liechtenstein three months after the G20 promised to clamp down on tax havens.

The big deal is that British tax dodgers using Liechtenstein banks will have to come clean or have their accounts shut down. In return, they get a cushy deal on their tax bill, with penalties limited to 10 percent as opposed to the maximum 100 percent and/or a spell at Her Majesty's pleasure.

Given that just a few months ago HMRC's tax boss Dave Hartnett told a *Panorama* programme that he had "smoking guns, smoking howitzers" on the Liechtenstein dodgers – including household names – this is quite a comedown, ruling out the powerful deterrent to tax evasion of seeing a well-known suit taken down the steps (a fate that often befalls tax credit and benefit fiddlers). And many may prefer to keep quiet and take their chances.

But at least some cash should come in quickly at a time when, having slashed thousands of jobs, HMRC simply doesn't have the manpower to chase tax fiddlers (hence the simultaneous second amnesty being offered to all offshore dodgers, which is hoped to net 50,000 evaders who would otherwise get off scot-free). For this limited result, however, the price of the Liechtenstein deal is that tax evasion through the principality will eventually revert to business as usual, since Liechtenstein will only be asked to come clean on Brits with accounts there if the taxman can produce convincing evidence of evasion in the first place. This is the standard "tax information exchange agreement" that already exists and, as *Eye* 1241 exposed, has already proved completely useless.

Timms even *endorsed* the Alpine centre of tax evasion and dirty-money laundering, announcing that "investors can in future take advantage of the skills and experience of Liechtenstein's investment and banking service". Soon the principality will thus operate with all its tax breaks, almost as secretly as before but with added international approval. Far from the "start of the end" of tax havens that Gordon Brown promised back in April, the reality will be a new lease of life.

PS: The presence on the treasury board of big-time offshore tax avoider and Audit Commission chairman Michael O'Higgins (*Eye* 1240) is forcing Timms to perform linguistic gymnastics. "It is wrong that some people evade paying their fair share of tax by hiding assets in offshore accounts", he announced – deftly, er, avoiding the word "avoid", since this is precisely what O'Higgins did on a large scale using an elaborate Jersey structure.

ONE MAN who is unlikely to be troubled by the taxman is *Daily Mail* proprietor Lord Rothermere, who owns his media empire through a series of offshore companies and trusts and who, despite being born in the UK, living his entire life here and building his own stately home here, claims to be domiciled for tax purposes in France.

As *Eye* 1231 revealed, he was all set for the bracing experience of a tax investigation with a view to withdrawing his "non-dom" benefits after HMRC's lawyers and strategy board had given the go-ahead. Then HMRC boss Dave Hartnett stepped in to block the investigation, enabling Rothermere to renew his non-dom season ticket.

This didn't impress one MP, the Lib Dems' Adrian Sanders, who recently asked the National Audit Office to investigate. The new auditor general (and former managing partner at tax-avoidance advisers PwC), Amyas Morse, has declined. With unusual logic he claimed his auditors have an "obligation not to disclose information about individual taxpayers under S182(4) of the Finance Act 1989, and are therefore not in a position to look at the particular case you referred to in your letter".

The Independent Police Complaints Commission's remit covers allegations of corruption against HMRC officials, but as there's no suspicion of brown envelopes – just cravenness before a politically influential press baron – it seems the taxman can carry on striking cosy deals with the rich and powerful with impunity, behind the veil of statutory confidentiality.

Rothermere further cemented his commitment to Blighty last month, meanwhile, by becoming president of the Imperial War Museum Foundation, in line with other patriotic positions such as being a freeman of the City of London – which involves swearing an archaic oath of allegiance to the monarch. Zut alors!

In the City

KEVIN MAXWELL, holder of the record as Britain's biggest ever bankrupt, is once again threatened with bankruptcy.

A bankruptcy petition has been filed against him by old established London moneylender/ pawnbroker TM Sutton. The case was adjourned last Friday until 23 October. Sutton, which offers to lend up to £1m secured on personal assets, filed the petition initially last January. How much it is owed is unclear.

Following the collapse of his father Cap'n Bob's publishing empire, Kevin Maxwell was made bankrupt in 1992 for £406.5m. He was automatically discharged three years later. In 2005, he again faced bankruptcy with debts of £32m but avoided it with an individual voluntary arrangement with his creditors, who accepted 3p in the pound. Maxwell claimed to own assets worth less than £100,000, but was helped out by a mystery benefactor who made £1m available to his creditors.

Maxwell was active in London property deals before the credit crunch hit. He is still director of six companies. However, five are in liquidation or administration or about to be struck off.

PHONY pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has finally settled a 14-year dispute between Harrods and Helga Schwarzschild, the elderly inheritor of a safe deposit box at the store whose contents, mainly family jewellery, were worth up to £100,000.

Schwarzschild, an 82-year-old spinster, had been seeking the return of the jewellery since 1995. In 2006 her lawyers sued Harrods, accusing it of a breach of duty as the bailee or custodian of the contents of the box. The following year the claim was ruled out of time because it had not been made within six years of knowledge of the loss. But this decision was overturned on appeal in March 2008, allowing the case to proceed. The litigation was settled in March this year ahead of an expected week-long trial set for last month.

Schwarzschild's lawyers would not discuss the case, citing a confidentiality agreement. However, it is understood that a payment was made as well as the return of certain items of jewellery.

The disputed fate of the contents of the Schwarzschild safe deposit box emerged after it was revealed that a Harrods safe deposit box belonging to Fayed's arch-enemy "Tiny" Rowland had been opened three times in 1995 and its contents copied. Fayed and four associates were subsequently questioned in 1998 by Scotland Yard over the burglary, but no charges were brought. Fayed subsequently settled a civil claim brought by Rowland's widow, Josie Rowland, with a payment of £1.4m in 2000.

Scotland Yard also investigated a 1997 complaint from Helga Schwarzschild, although no charges were brought. The box had been rented in 1955 by her mother, who died in 1970, and rental payments for the box ceased in 1983. After five years Harrods was entitled to open the box, which it did in 1988. A list of jewellery, watches and banknotes was made. Then, in 1994, the box was opened again and this time the contents were mixed together with those of other non-paying box holders.

It was alleged by Fayed's former security chief, Robert Loftus, in statements given to the police and Schwarzschild's advisers, that in 1994 Fayed's wife, Heini, had viewed the contents and had selected certain Schwarzschild items, which were later taken to Fayed's office at the store. This has always been vigorously denied by Fayed and his lawyers, who have rejected any wrongdoing by Fayed or his wife.

Schwarzschild's then lawyers wrote to Mrs Fayed in 1998 requesting information about these events. Her latest lawyers also made the allegation in the recent litigation when responding to the Harrods defence. However, this particular claim was not part of the action brought against Harrods, which did not name Fayed or his wife.

Harrods denied involvement by the Fayeds. But in the wondrous ways of the law, Harrods raised its denied involvement in 1994 as a reason why the Schwarzschild claim was time-barred! This defence was accepted as a reason for stopping the case in October 2007, but during the appeal last year the allegation was described by both Mr Justice Eady and Schwarzschild's QC as a "red herring".

Harrods initially denied any knowledge of the jewellery when first contacted in 1995 by private investigator Nathan Dony, hired by Helga Schwarzschild to trace the family heirlooms. This response was admitted to have been both "inaccurate" and "dishonest". Two lists of contents had been made in 1988 and 1994. According to Loftus, a 1994 list was made by a firm of jewellers asked by Harrods to value the Schwarzschild items. This list contains references to ruby, diamond and emerald rings, pearl necklaces and bracelets and gold watches. Seven of the 17 listed items were conservatively valued at more than £1,000 each; their total valuation was a very conservative £19,000. Harrods was owed £363 in rent arrears by 1988 and was entitled to sell items in order to obtain repayment.

Dony wrote in 1997 demanding the return of the jewellery, and so did Schwarzschild's then lawyers in 1998. Harrods subsequently admitted in 1998 to knowing what had happened to the box – but it did not return any items. Schwarzschild was shown a number of the items which Harrods believed had come from her mother's box (there were at least 26). However, she only identified one – a ladies' watch – and rejected the other items.

In 2001, lawyers acting for Schwarzschild demanded the handing-over of 19 items of jewellery. Five items were held from 2002 by her lawyers, pending a settlement of the dispute. In 2006, this demand was repeated. When Harrods did not return any jewellery on the second demand, Schwarzschild's lawyers began the legal proceedings which had been threatened since 1997, seeking the jewellery and/or damages.

Harrods – which claimed it would return what it held that Schwarzschild could prove was hers – denied that it had breached its duty and responded that the Schwarzschild claim was time-barred because it had not been made within six years of the earlier demands for the jewellery.

In March this year the case was settled with no order as to legal costs, leaving Helga Schwarzschild with some items of jewellery and a payment which may be little more than her costs after a 14-year battle to reclaim her property.

● The problems at the Harrods pension fund – like at many similar old line final-salary schemes – are getting worse, meanwhile.

The latest accounts for the Knightsbridge store show that Fayed has agreed to pump a minimum £10m into the fund by January next year and a further £10m by March 2010 if certain unspecified conditions are met. In 2006 he agreed the scheme would be fully funded by 2014.

More than £50m has since been injected into the fund. But the latest accounts show that the deficit at last January was £14m and has since increased. No wonder there was no dividend from Harrods this year to its parent company to fund any payment to the Fayeds, compared with the £61m they received in 2008. But a dividend of £7.6m has since been paid – not from Harrods but, it appears, from the reserves of its parent, Harrods (UK).

LEADING criminal defence QC Richard Ferguson, who died last month, helped *Private Eye* successfully defend a libel action in 2000 brought by the pharaoh's Rowland safe deposit box cracker.

Ferguson's cross-examination and advocacy skills often managed to create winning cards for criminal defendants they never knew they had. The QC was convinced he could have obtained an acquittal for Guinness chief executive Ernest Saunders – his plan was to build the defence on holes in the prosecution case and not allow Saunders to give evidence. But marketing expert Saunders knew better, ignored that advice, gave evidence and sank himself and his co-defendants with his obvious lies and denials of responsibility.

His co-defendants saw Saunders' mistake and accepted their briefs' advice to stay silent. But then Richard Ferguson knew all about juries and guilty men.

DIRECTOR Richard Alderman has shown commendable independence, as well as knowing a hospital pass when he is thrown one, by deftly sidestepping Lord Mandelson's suggestion that the Serious Farce Office investigate MG Rover.

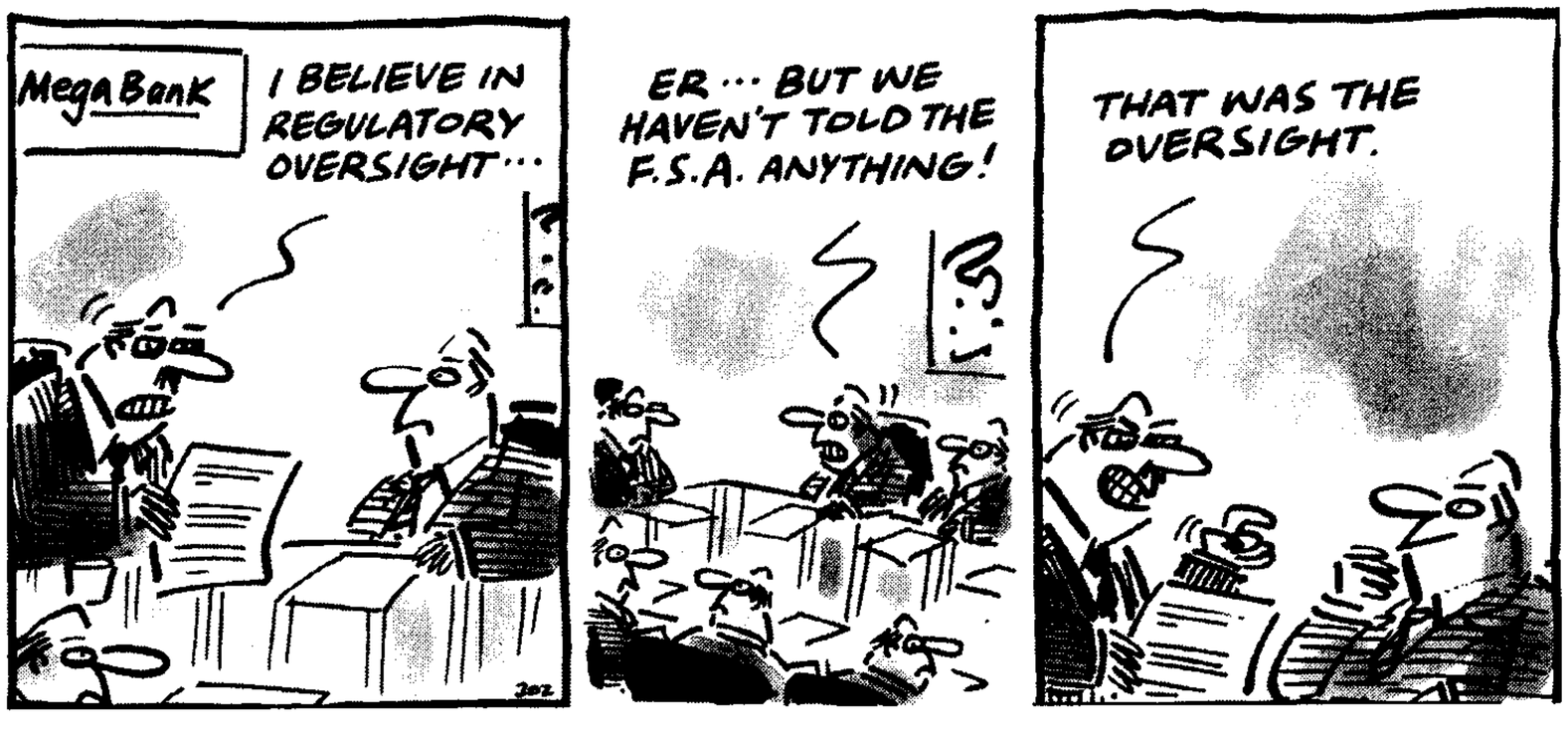
The SFO's need for winners was clearly more pressing than the need to satisfy a lame duck government by providing an excuse to not publish the inspectors' critical report. Times and politics have moved on since BAE. This time next year, the Grey Man is likely to have a new political boss keen to see how the SFO justifies its £40m-plus budget.

Mandelson has now turned to the far less painful option of disqualifying the Phoenix Four from being company directors. Mandelson's

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG



Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, or BIAS, is now promising to publish the inspectors' report next month. It will be interesting to see whether the inspectors recommended disqualification – and if so, on what grounds – or even if they identified any prosecutable offences.

If so, it is strange that no such prosecution or disqualification proceedings were ready to go as soon as they handed in their report in June, or perhaps at any time in the previous four years they were digging through the MG Rover wreckage. Previous inspections have either triggered police investigations on the way through or resulted in automatic disqualification proceedings – something that could already have been recommended by the MG Rover liquidators.

But none of that seems to have been done; instead, BIAS lawyers have been instructed to prepare proceedings. Directors often accept disqualification rather than spend money to fight a likely losing cause. It will be interesting to see whether the Phoenix Four are all pursued, and whether they continue their denial of any wrongdoing. It's a sacrifice they may consider worthwhile after taking more than £40m out of the loss-making car company.

PLANET FOOTBALL

Hull City

CLEARLY concentration on avoiding relegation last season prevented the directors from such mundane matters as filing the Premier League club's accounts for the 2007-08 promotion season. These were due in May but have still not been filed.

Even more overdue are the accounts for Tiger Holdings, the parent company whose owners have been hidden behind a Jersey nominee company. These accounts were due in February. These are criminal offences. However, last month Essex property investor Russell Bartlett appeared on the Tiger board as a director (replacing one of the two Jersey-based directors) and Amanda Bartlett as company secretary (replacing the Jersey firm linked to the nominees). No role, though, for fellow Hull directors Martin Walker and Paul Duffen.

Meanwhile, last week Investec Bank registered another debenture on the club's assets covering its funding.

Portsmouth

WOULD-BE Gulf buyer or middleman Sulaiman Al-Fahim is at least now a director of the club as the new season begins, even if he has so far failed to come up with the finance to complete the takeover from Alexandre Gaydamak. He is not on the board, though, of Portsmouth's immediate parent company, Miland Development 2004.

However, Coutts, now part of the taxpayer-controlled Royal Bank of Scotland, last month registered a charge over the club's deposit at the bank as security for any moneys owed by Miland!

Manchester United

FACED with the inevitable departure of US taxpayer-rescued sponsor AIG, the club has found another insurance name to put on its shirts from next season – Aon.

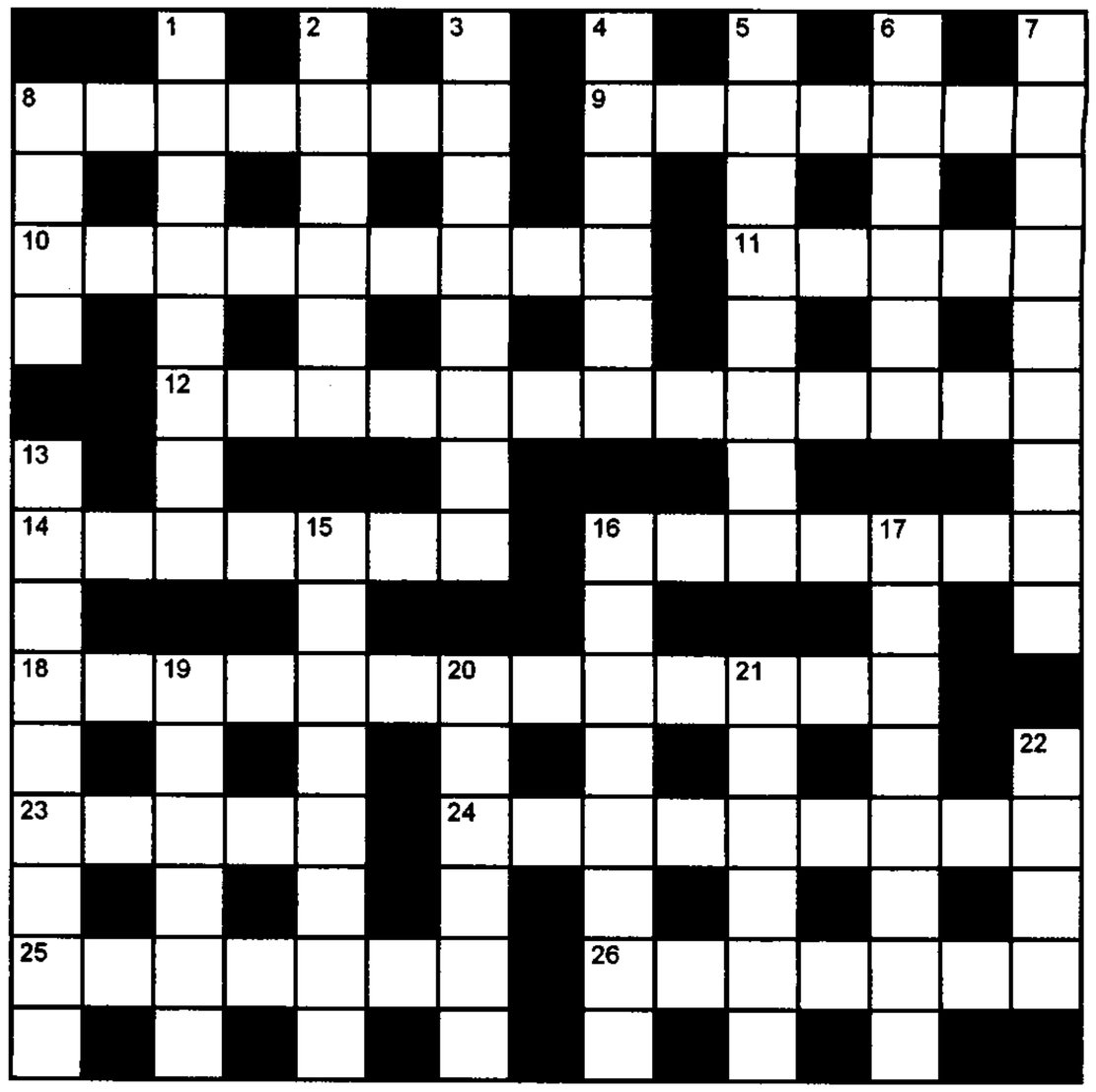
The leading insurance brokers are in need of some good PR. Last January they were fined a record £5.25m by the FSA for failing to prevent "suspicious payments", aka bribes, to obtain business in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burma, Indonesia and Vietnam. There were 66 such payments involving a total of $7m to nine overseas parties between 2005 and 2007, when Aon turned itself in to the FSA and the Serious Organised Crime Agency. And there had been other large payments before 2005. Aon was accused by the FSA of behaviour that "undermines the integrity of the UK financial services sector".

But that still makes it a "fit and proper" sponsor of the Premier League champions. Especially at £25m a year.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 398

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 28 August 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

8 Hi, Peter – outed? Please! (7)

9 Old NT director grabbing old bag (7)

10 To-die-for oral sex act – and a bang to finish you off? (5,4)

11 All right, the intelligence service's ditched a flipping nutter (5)

12 Stupid verbal diarrhoea a result of having this? (4,3,6)

14 Passionless Saul fumbled with axe (7)

16 What Archer was: accomplished – pardon?!! (7)

18 Brown's time here running out – admitting entering end of Third Way (7,6)

23 Muddled Labour's second seat lost (2,3)

24 Mad Ivy's course fixating on erection? (2,3,4)

25 Miss, popping into bra feature: paparazzo's dream shot? (5-2)

26 Have sex with juvenile, though not hard a lot (7)

DOWN

1 Loathing ... in men, Dodi Fayed, for one (8)

2 Hot thing revealing mound in chic Armani bottoms (6)

3 Left fly undone, covered in messy lube – that's more than enough! (8)

4 Exhibitionist's turned-on bathroom feature? (6)

5 Conservative no-hoper on international body: "Nothing in it" (5-3)

6 Exercises hit CIA abroad (3,3)

7 Violence when love holds relaxed in the sack (9)

8 Non-PC gay's calculated praise (4)

13 William Hague certainly has one testicle short, needing date to repair (4,5)

15 Pissed kinky spoon merchant getting Dante pissed (8)

16 Stop Nick having sex abroad (3,2,3)

17 Old-fashioned published Democrat had a shag (not married) (8)

19 So Di screwed around inside with male ageing comedian (6)

20 Dwarf's arse grabbed by heartless bloke (6)

21 Partner once energy reduced gets PMT bad, so absolved (6)

22 Tart embeds end of nail in nut (4)

Crossword 397 winner: WILLIAM HALY

ACROSS: 1 Camp 4 Safe seat 9 Virtuoso 10 Geisha 11/8 Change of government 12 Attlee 15 North Korea 16 Chancellor 19 Numb 21 Breast 22 No excuse 24 Offish 26 Tick over 27 Allergic 28/13 Turncoat.

DOWN: 2 Atishoo 3 Putin 4 Scoffer 5/25 Fag hag 6 Saint Joan 7 Athlete 12 Abhorrence 14 Tentative 17 Harmful 18 Lunatic 20 Masseur 23 Clout.

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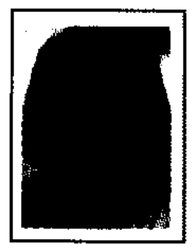

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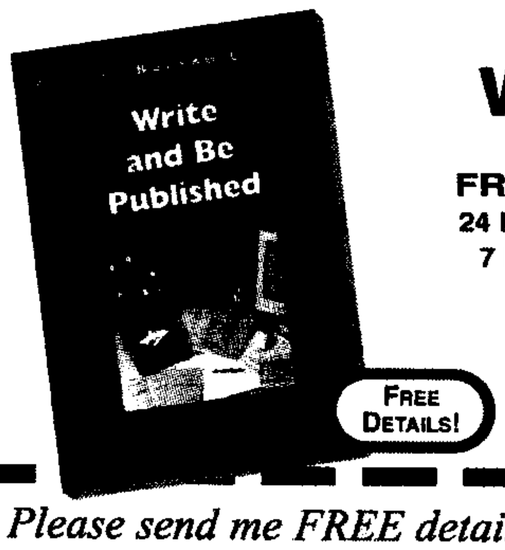

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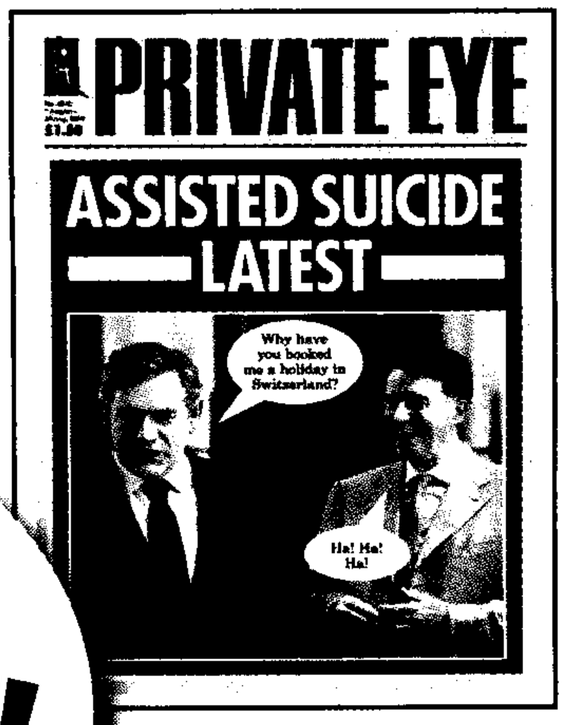

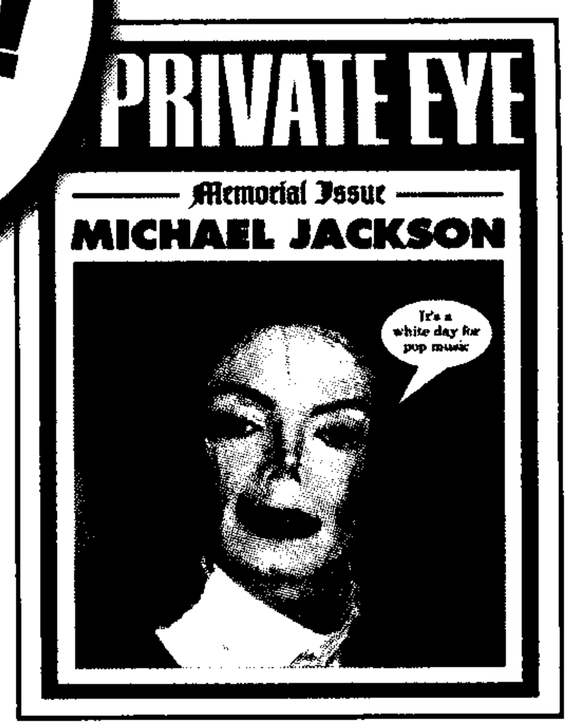

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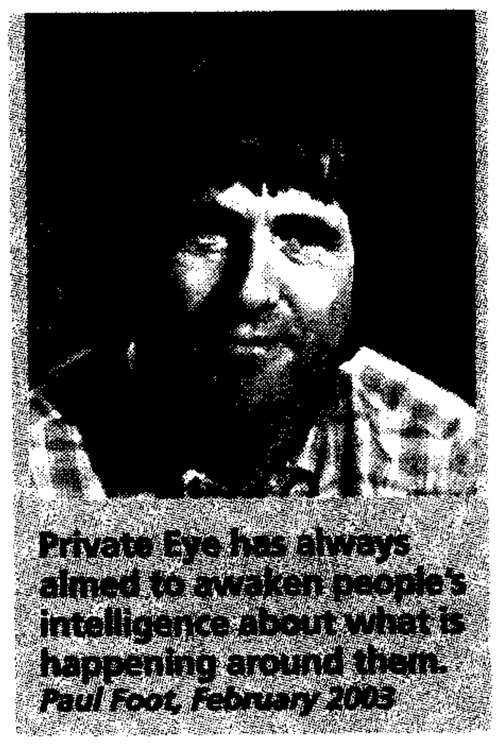
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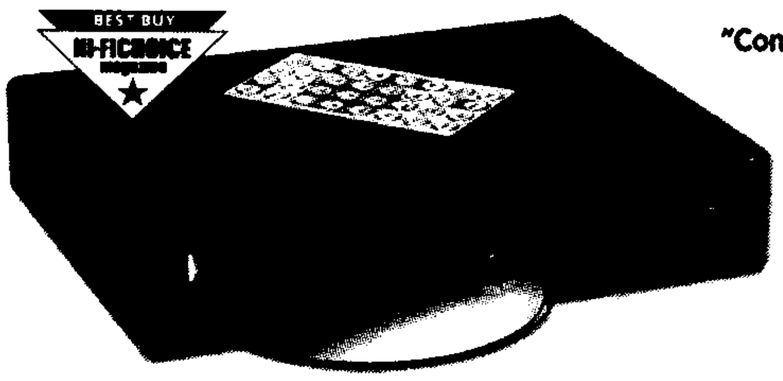

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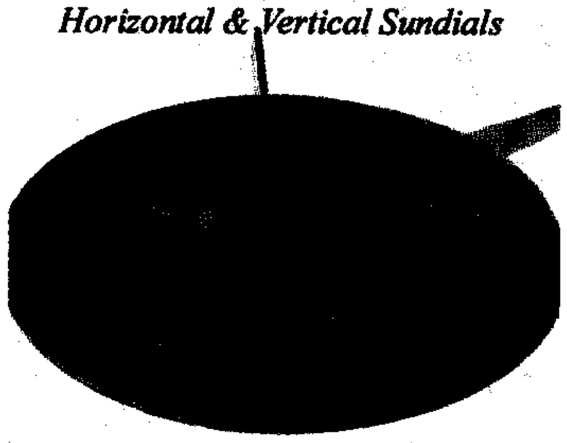

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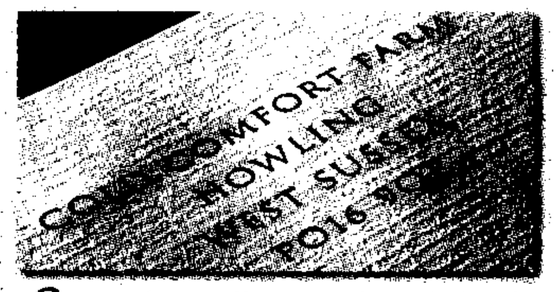

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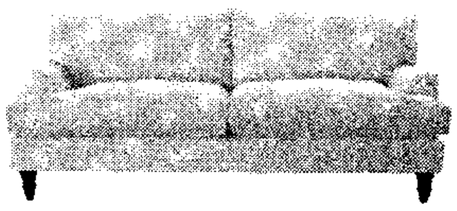

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When Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7 he threw out the rule book. The Brennan is a CD player with a hard disk that stores up to 5,000 CDs. It saves space and clutter and delivers near immediate access to an entire music collection. Customers rediscover/fall in love with their music again simply because the Brennan makes it so accessible.

The Brennan also records from vinyl and cassette so you can enjoy your entire music collection but keep it out of the way in another room or retire it to the attic.

You can use the JB7 in two ways. You can use it with loudspeakers or you can play it through your existing HiFi. The Brennan gives names to tracks and albums from a database of 2.6 million CDs as you load each CD. It takes a few minutes to load a CD.

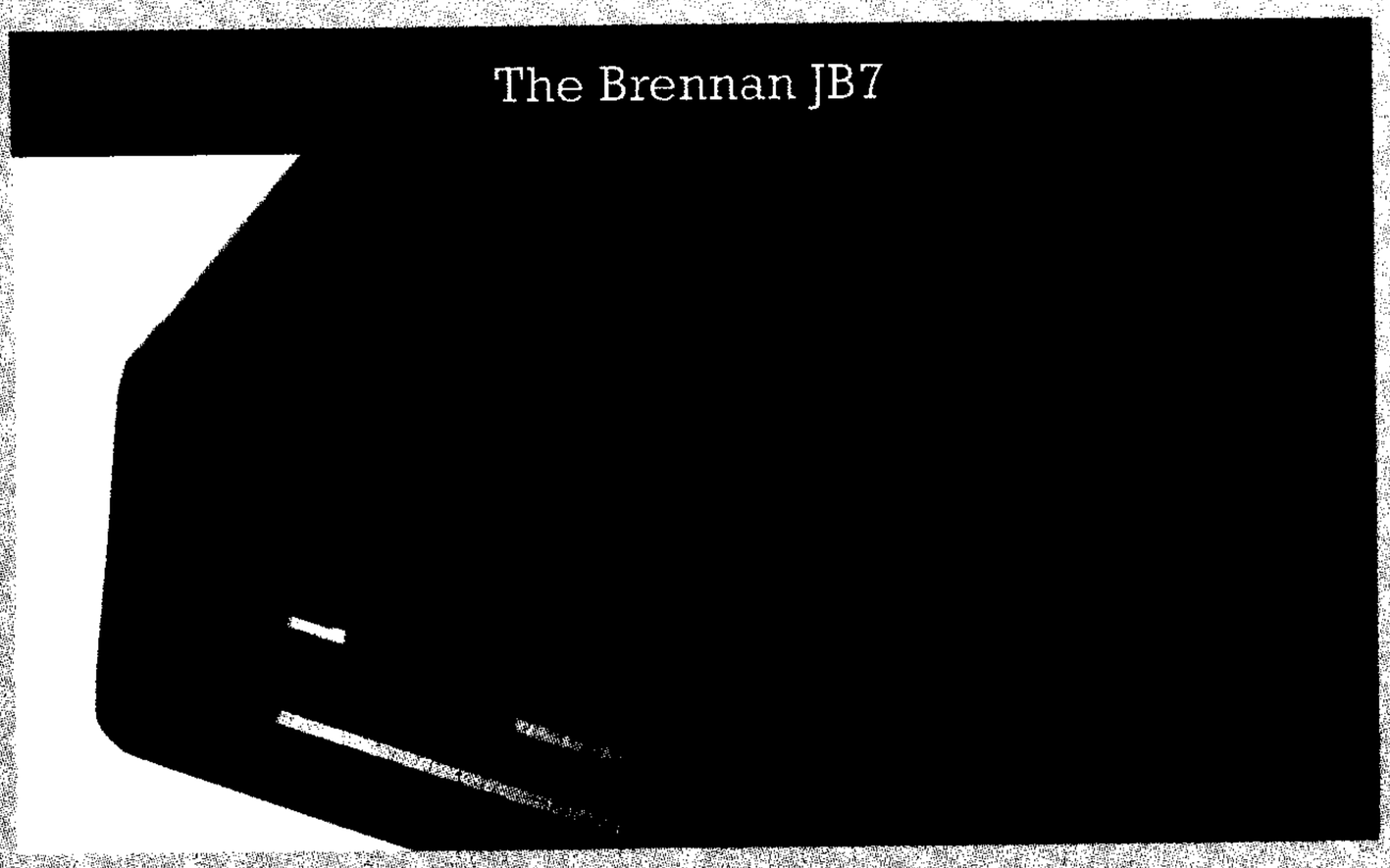
The Brennan has a unique text search facility that shows a reducing number of matches as you press successive letters on the remote control. Once you get the hang of it you can find one track or album out of your entire music collection in a few seconds. So to find "Nessun Dorma" you would press letters "NES" or "DOR" and scroll through the shortlist of matches.

What's the point owning CDs you don't Play?

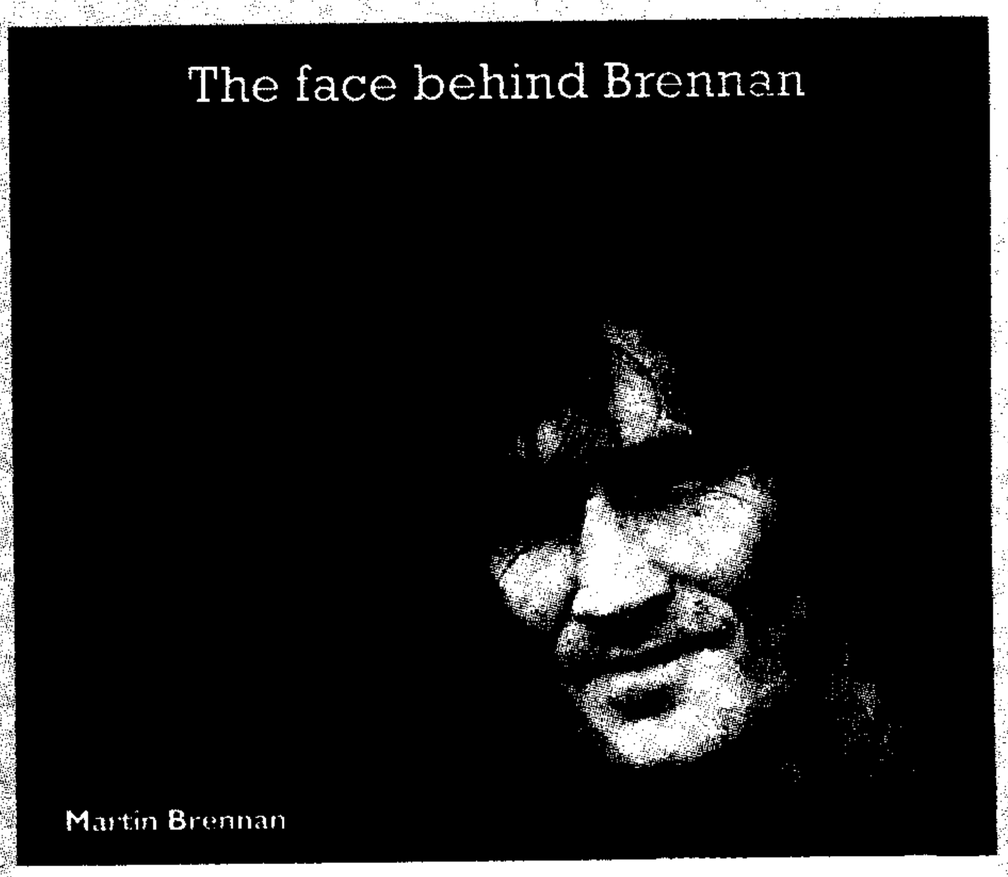
What's the point in owning hundreds of CDs worth thousands of pounds if you never listen to them? The problem with CDs is that it's quicker to make a cup of coffee than dip into a CD. Try timing how long it takes to pick a CD, load it in the CD player, play a snippet from a track or two, eject it and put it back where it came from. Then there is the problem of finding music. The print on a CD spine is tiny. What if the track is on a compilation CD? What if the CD is in the car? Then there is the clutter. You need to keep your CDs near the player or you wont play them. So you are forced to share your living space with hundreds of cheap plastic boxes.

CDs are great but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore - thats why Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7.

The Brennan JB7



The face behind Brennan



Martin Brennan

Key Points

Three sizes - up to 5000 CDs

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Martin is a physicist and computer engineer. He has around twenty silicon chips to his name, written over a million lines of computer code and co-designed the world's first 64 bit games computer.

"I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi changer. My second was a ten CD changer for the car. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. These players were fine but a bit clunky - there were several seconds of silence between CDs and in the car I could never find the right CD.

A few years ago I had a go at loading my cassette collection onto a PC. Cassette were obsolete but I owned around 100 and the music on them reflected an important period in my life. I recorded all of the cassettes on to the PC over a period of several weeks.

The thing is I never listened to the music on the PC. Somehow using the computer to listen to music never worked out. Maybe the computer was in the wrong place but I think it lacked the immediacy of a physical play button. In the end the computer got a virus and the music files were lost - I still had the cassettes thankfully. The JB7 is really my personal ideal music player".

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